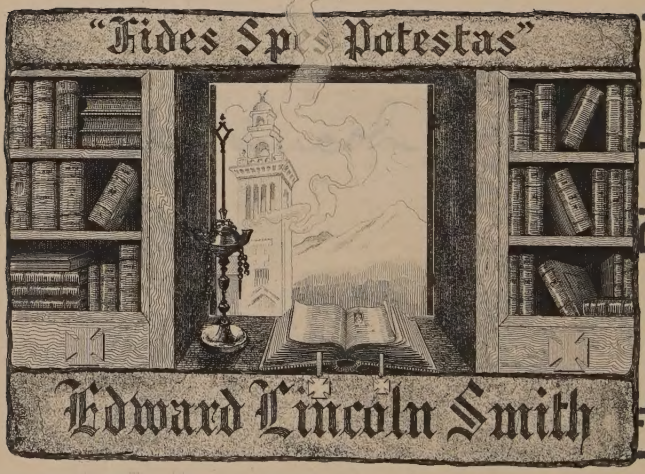


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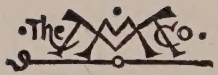
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# THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO THEOLOGY

BY

HENRY CHURCHILL KING

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY
IN OBERLIN COLLEGE

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To the Members of the
Harvard Summer School of Theology

OF THE YEAR 1901

IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR INTEREST IN THE LECTURES

THAT FORMED THE BASIS OF THIS BOOK

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# PREFACE

THERE is no attempt in this book to present a complete system of theology, though much of such a system is passed in review, but only to study a special phase of theological thinking. The precise theme of the book is the relations of the social consciousness to theology. This is the subject upon which the writer was asked to lecture at the Harvard Summer School of Theology of 1901; and the book has grown out of the lectures there given. In preparing the book for the press, however, the lecture form has been entirely abandoned, and considerable material added.

The importance of the theme seems to justify a somewhat thorough-going treatment. If one believes at all in the presence of God in history—and the Christian can have no doubt here—he must be profoundly

interested in such a phenomenon as the steady growth of the social consciousness. Hardly any inner characteristic of our time has a stronger historical justification than that consciousness; and it has carried the reason and conscience of the men of this generation in rare degree. Having its own comparatively independent development, and yet making an ethical demand that is thoroughly Christian, it furnishes an almost ideal standpoint from which to review our theological statements, and, at the same time, a valuable test of their really Christian quality.

In attempting, then, a careful study of the relations of the social consciousness to theology, this book aims, first, definitely to get at the real meaning of the social consciousness as the theologian must view it, and so to bring clearly into mind the unconscious assumptions of the social consciousness itself; and then to trace out the influence of the social consciousness upon the conception of religion, and upon theo-

logical doctrine. The larger portion of the book is naturally given to the influence upon theological doctrine; and to make the discussion here as pointed as possible, the different elements of the social consciousness are considered separately.

It should be noted, however, that the question raised is not the historical one, How, as a matter of fact, has the social consciousness modified the conception of religion or the statement of theological doctrine? but the theoretical one, How should the social consciousness naturally affect religion and doctrine? In this sense, the result might be called, in President Hyde's phrase, a "social theology"; but, as I believe that the social consciousness is at bottom only a true sense of the fully personal, I prefer myself to think of the present book as only carrying out in more detail the contention of my *Reconstruction in Theology*—that theology should aim at a restatement of doctrine in strictly personal terms. So conceived, in spite of its casual origin, this book follows very naturally upon

the previous book. Some of the same topics necessarily recur here; and references to the *Reconstruction* have been freely made, in order to avoid all unnecessary repetition.

That this social sense of the fully personal has finally a real and definite contribution to make to theology, I cannot doubt. I can only hope that the present discussion may be found at least suggestive, particularly in the analysis of the social consciousness, and in the treatment of mysticism and of the ethical in religion, as well as in the consideration of the special influence of the elements of the social consciousness upon the restatement of doctrine. Of the doctrinal applications, the application to the problem of redemption may be considered, perhaps, of most significance.

HENRY CHURCHILL KING.

Oberlin College, June, 1902.

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# THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

## INTRODUCTION

### *THE THEME*

No theologian can be excused to-day from a careful study of the relations of theology and the social consciousness. Whether this study becomes a formal investigation or not, the social consciousness is so deep and significant a phenomenon in the ethical life of our time, that it cannot be ignored by the theologian who means to bring his message to men really home. This book is written in the conviction that, while men are thus moved as never before by a deep sense of mutual influence and obligation, they have also as deep and genuine an interest as ever in the really greatest questions of religion and theology. Interests so significant and so akin cannot long remain isolated in the mind. They are certain soon profoundly to influence

each other. And this mutual influence of theology and the social consciousness form the theme of this book.

Two questions are naturally involved in this theme. First: Has theology given any help, or has it any help to give, to the social consciousness?—the question of the first division of the book. Second: Has the social consciousness made any contribution, or has it any contribution to make, to theology?—the question of the second and third divisions. That is to say: On the one hand, Have the great facts which theology studies any help to give to the man who faces the problem of social progress—of the steady elevation of the race? On the other hand, Has the great fact of the immensely quickened social consciousness of our time, with all that it means, any help to give to the theologian in his attempt to bring the great Christian truths really home to men, to make them more real, more rational, more vital?

Or again: On the one hand, do theological doctrines—the most adequate statements we can make of the great Christian truths—best explain and best ground the social consciousness, so as best to bring our entire thought in this sphere of the social into unity? Is

the Christian truth so great that it not only includes all that is true in this new social consciousness—is fully able to take it up into itself and to make it feel at home there—but also, so great that it alone can give the social consciousness its fullest meaning, alone enable it to understand itself, and alone furnish it adequate motive and power? Is the social consciousness, in truth, only a disguised statement of Christian convictions, and does it really require the Christian religion and its thoughtful expression to complete itself? Must the social consciousness say, when it comes to full self-knowledge,—I am myself an unmeaning and unjustified by-product, if there is not a God in the full Christian sense? and, so saying, confirm again the great Christian truths? This is the question of the first division.

On the other hand, since the task of any given theologian is necessarily temporary, and since any marked modification of the consciousness of men will inevitably demand some restatement of theological doctrine, the question here becomes—To what changed points of view in religion and theology, to what restatements of doctrine, and so to what truer appreciation of Christian truth, does

the new social consciousness naturally lead? How do the affirmations of the social consciousness, as the outcome of a careful, inductive study of the social evolution of the race, affect our theological statements? This is the question of the second and third divisions of the book.

Our discussion must of course assume and build on the conclusions of sociology, and of New Testament theology, especially the conclusions concerning the social teaching of Jesus.

# THE REAL MEANING OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS FOR THEOLOGY

## INTRODUCTION

### *THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE THEOLOGIAN*

FIRST, then, what is the real meaning of the social consciousness, as the theologian must view it? The answer to this question involves a preliminary one: What is the point of view of the theologian in any investigation? One can only give his own answer.

First of all, the theologian, as such, is an *interpreter*, not a tracer of causal connections. He builds everywhere upon the scientific investigator, and takes from him the statement of facts and processes. With these he has primarily nothing to do. With reference to the social consciousness, therefore, he does not attempt to do over again the work of the sociologist; he asks only, What does the social consciousness, in the light of the whole

of life and thought, mean; not, How did it come about?

The theologian, too, is a *believer in the supremacy of spiritual interests;* this is his central contention. He affirms strenuously, with the scientific worker, the place and value of the mechanical; but he is certain that the mechanical can understand itself even, only as it is seen to be simple means, and thus clearly subordinate in significance. His problem is, therefore, everywhere, that of ideal interpretation, not of mechanical explanation. But, while he has nothing to do with the scientific tracing of immediate causal connections, he recognizes causality itself as requiring an ultimate explanation, that cannot be mechanically given. The theologian must be in this, then, an *ideal* interpreter, and an inquirer after the *ultimate* cause.

The theologian assumes, moreover, the legitimacy and value of the fact of *religion*; for theology is simply the thoughtful, comprehensive, and unified expression of what religion means to us. The meaning of the social consciousness to the theologian involves, therefore, at once the question of its relation to religious conviction.

The point of view of the Christian theo-

logian involves, besides, the *reality of the personal God* in personal relation to persons. Theology is in earnest in its thought of God, and knows that God is everywhere to be taken into account; that, if there is a God at all, he is not to be exiled into some corner of his universe, but is intimately concerned in all, is at the very heart of all; and that, therefore, it is not a matter of merely curious interest or of subsidiary inquiry, whether we are to look at our questions with God in mind.

Finally, the Christian theologian tries everywhere to make his point of view *the point of view of Christ*. The theology, upon which he ultimately stakes his all, is Christ's theology. He knows that there is much concerning which he cannot refuse to think, but upon which Christ has not expressed himself either explicitly or by clear inference; but in all this unavoidable supplementary thinking he aims to be absolutely loyal to the spirit of Christ.

From this point of view of the Christian theologian, now, what does the social consciousness mean? The answer may be given under four heads: (1) the definition of the social consciousness; (2) the inadequacy of

the analogy of the organism, as an expression of the social consciousness; (3) the necessity of the facts, of which the social consciousness is the reflection, if ideal interests are to be supreme; (4) the ultimate explanation and ground of the social consciousness.

These four topics form the subjects of the four chapters of the first division of our inquiry.

## CHAPTER I

### *THE DEFINITION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

THE simplest and probably the most accurate single expression we can give to the social consciousness, is to say that it is a growing sense of the real brotherhood of men. But five elements seem plainly involved in this, and may be profitably separated in our thought, if that is to be clear and definite: — a deepening sense (1) of the likeness or like-mindedness of men, (2) of their mutual influence, (3) of the value and sacredness of the person, (4) of mutual obligation, and (5) of love.

#### I. THE SENSE OF THE LIKE-MINDEDNESS OF MEN[1]

If a society is "a group of like-minded individuals," if the "all-essential" requisites for coöperation are "like-mindedness and consciousness of kind," as Giddings tells us, then certainly a prime element in the social consciousness is likeness and the sense of

[1] Cf. Giddings, *Elements of Sociology*, pp. 6, 10, 65, 66, 77.

it—a growing sense of the mental and moral resemblance and "potential resemblance" of all men, and of all classes of men, though not equality of powers.

"Equality of need" among men, too,[1] to which sociology comes as one of its surest conclusions, implies a common capacity, even if in varying degrees, to enter into the most fundamental interests of life, and so points unmistakably to the essential likeness of men in the most important things.

So, too, sociology's unquestioning assertion that both smaller and larger groups of men constantly tend toward unity, assumes potential resemblance.

And the uniform experience and prescription of social workers, that *really* knowing "how the other half lives" brings increasing sympathy, also affirm the fundamental likeness of men. Every painstaking investigation of a social question comes out at some point or other with a fresh discovery of a previously hidden, underlying resemblance between classes of men.

From the careful, inductive study of social evolution, too, the men of our day see, as no other generation has seen, that the great force

[1] Cf. Giddings, *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

always and everywhere at work in that evolution has been likeness and the consciousness of it.

For all these reasons, this generation believes, as men never believed before, in the essential like-mindedness of men; and this deepening sense of the like-mindedness of men is certainly one element in the modern social consciousness.

## II. THE SENSE OF THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF MEN

A second element in the social consciousness, and, perhaps, that which has most of all characterized it through the larger period of its growth, is the strong sense of the mutual influence of men—that we are all "members one of another."

1. *Contributing Lines of Thought.*—It is worth seeing how firmly planted the idea is. Several lines of thought have united to induce men to emphasize—perhaps even to over-emphasize—this way of thinking of society. The influence of natural science, in the first place, has been inevitably in this direction. Its root idea of the universality of law forces upon one the thought of a world which is a *coherent* whole, a unity with

universal forces in it, in which every part is inextricably connected with every other. So, too, the acceptance of the theory of evolution has led science to regard the whole history of the physical universe as an organic growth.

Psychology, also, with its present-day emphasis, in Baldwin and Royce, upon the constant presence and fundamental character of *imitation*, and its insistence upon the still more fundamental impulsiveness of consciousness which Dewey believes underlies imitation,[1] is really proclaiming exactly this element of the social consciousness. And the whole assertion by the later psychology of the unity of man – mind and body, and of the complex intertwining of all the functions of the mind, is in closest harmony with a similar view of society.

Philosophy, too, is exerting all along a half-unconscious pressure toward the thought of the organic unity of society. That philosophy may exist at all, it must start from the assumption of a universe, a real unity of truth, and its problem is to find a *discerned* unity. It knows no unrelated being, and, consequently, whether it theoretically accepts

[1] See *The New World*, Sept., 1898, p. 516.

the formulation or not, it must admit that, as a matter of fact, to be is to be in relations. It asserts as a universal fact, what natural science and psychology both affirm in their own respective spheres, the concrete relatedness of all. It cannot well deny the same thought when applied to society. Its repeated attempts, moreover, to conceive all as a developing unity, and the profound influence of the analogy of the organism upon its history, both further sustain the organic view of society.

Christianity, as well, has been a powerful factor in this direction from the beginning, for it really first gave the Idea of Humanity.[1]

2. *The Threefold Form of the Conviction.*— Sustained, now, by all these movements in natural science, psychology, philosophy, and Christianity, this thought of the mutual influence of men has taken three forms: that mutual influence is inevitable, isolation impossible; that mutual influence is desirable, isolation to be shunned; that mutual influence is indispensable, isolation blighting.

(1) This second element in the social consciousness has meant, then, in the first place, a growing sense of the inevitableness

[1] Cf. Lotze, *The Microcosmus*, Vol. II, p. 211.

of the mutual influence of all men, and of all classes of men; that we are all parts of one whole, each part unavoidably affected by every other; that we are bound up in one bundle of life with all men, and cannot live an isolated life if we would; that we do influence one another whether we will or not, and tend unconsciously to draw others to our level and are ourselves drawn toward theirs; that we joy and suffer together whether we will or not, and grow or deteriorate together.

(2) But the mutual influence of men means more than this: not only that we do inevitably affect one another in living out our own life, but a growing sense of the fact that we are obviously not intended to come to our best in independence of one another; that we are made on so large a plan that we cannot come to our best alone; that we are evidently made for personal relations, and that, therefore, largeness of life for ourselves depends on our entering into the life of others.

(3) But even more than this is true. It is not only that entering into the life of others is a help in my life, it is *the* great help, the one great means, the indispensable, the essen-

tial condition of all largeness of life; it is the very meaning of life,—life itself. We are to find our life only in losing our life. Life is the fulfilment of relations. When we try to run away from the variety and complexity of these relations, we are running away from life itself. The indispensableness of these relations to others is assumed, also, in the assertion by the sociologist of an evolution toward a society, at once more and more complex, and more and more perfect.

But if I grow in the growth of another, the other grows in my growth. If the only thing of value that I can finally give is myself, the value of that gift depends upon the largeness and richness of the self given. For love's own sake, therefore, I must grow, must strive to bring to its highest perfection that work which is given me to do. A person is a social being called to contribute to the whole, in the line of his own best possibilities. One's largest ministry to others is to be rendered, then, through sacred regard for one's own calling, considered as exactly his place of largest service. Or, to put it the other way: I can come to my best only in work so great and in associations so large

that I may lose myself in them in perfect objectivity.

The mutual influence of men, therefore, is unavoidable, is desirable, is indispensable; isolation impossible, hindering, blighting. This is the true solidarity of the race, in which there is no fiction, no hiding in the inconceivable, and no pretense.

### III. THE SENSE OF THE VALUE AND SACREDNESS OF THE PERSON

The third element in the social consciousness, the sense of the value and sacredness of the person, follows naturally from the sense of like-mindedness and of mutual influence, but needs distinct and emphatic statement.

It is less easily separable than the other elements named, and, indeed, may be made to include all the others, and does, in a way, carry all with it. Thus broadly conceived, it has seemed to the writer that—with the return to the historical Christ—it might well be called the most notable moral characteristic of our time.[1] But, though less easily and definitely discriminated, one who knows

[1] See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, Chap. IX, pp, 169 ff.

deeply the modern social consciousness would surely feel that the very heart of it had been omitted, if this growing sense of the value and sacredness of the person did not come to strong expression. Reverence for personality — the steadily deepening sense that every person has a value not to be measured in anything else, and is in himself sacred to God and man — this it is which marks unmistakably every step in the progress of the individual and of the race. Without it, whatever the other marks of civilization, you have only tyranny and slavery; with it, though every trace of luxury and scientific invention be lacking, you have the perfection of human relations.

This sense of the value and sacredness of the person not only characterizes increasingly the whole social and moral evolution of the race, but it is to be seen in the clearly conscious demand for equality of rights, and, especially — to take a single example — in the growing recognition that the child is an individual with his own rights; that he has a personality of his own of a sanctity inviolable by the parent; that there are clear bounds beyond which no one may go without personal outrage. The recognition by

psychology of respect for personality as one of the three or four most fundamental conditions — if not the most essential of all — of happiness, of character, and of influence, is explicit confirmation of the truth of this element of the social consciousness.

### IV. THE SENSE OF OBLIGATION

But the elements of the social consciousness already named lead directly to a growing sense of obligation. Every man carries in himself his only possible standard of measurement of all else. A growing sense of the likeness of other men to himself quickens at once, therefore, the sense of obligation, and leads naturally to the Golden Rule. Recognition of mutual influence, too, inevitably carries with it a deeper sense of obligation; for, if we do affect others constantly, then we are manifestly under obligation not only to do direct service to others, but so to order our own lives as to help, not to hinder, others. The sense of the value and sacredness of the person plainly looks to the same deepening of obligation.

As an element of the social consciousness, the sense of obligation means for a given

individual, a growing sense of responsibility for all; and for society at large an increase in the number of those who feel the obligation to serve.

The growth in each of these directions cannot be questioned. There is no privileged class, in whose own consciences there is not being recognized more and more the right of the claim that they must justify themselves by service which shall be as unique as their privilege. In consequence, the conception of the governing classes is steadily changing, for both the governed and the governing, to some recognition of Christ's principle, that he who would be first must be servant of all. The sharp insistence of the sociologist that "organization must be for the organized" expresses the same thought. One must add sociology's double assertion, that society is really advancing toward its goal, and yet that a chief condition of the progress of society is unselfish leadership.[1] This can only mean that there is, increasingly, unselfish leadership, more and more of conscious, willing coöperation on the part of men in forwarding the social evolution.

[1] See Giddings, *Op. cit.*, pp. 302, 320–322.

None of us can return to the older attitude of comparative indifference, nor can we honestly defend it. We do have obligations and we own them; we are judging ourselves increasingly by Christ's test of ministering love.

### V. THE SENSE OF LOVE

And the social consciousness ends necessarily in love, in the broader, ethical meaning of that word. We shall never feel that the social consciousness is complete, short of real love. All the other elements of the social consciousness lead to love and are included in it. Even the sociologist must bring in as necessary results of the consciousness of kind—sympathy, affection, and desire for the recognition of others;[1] and he finds these always more or less distinctly at work among men.

These further considerations from the study of evolution confirm this result: that man is preëminently the social animal;[2] that with man we have clearly reached the stage of persons and of personal relations;[3] that the very existence and development of man re-

[1] Cf. Giddings, *Op. cit.*, pp. 65, 66.
[2] Cf. Giddings, *Op. cit.*, p. 241.
[3] See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 92–96.

quired love at every step;[1] and that the chief moral significance of man's prolonged infancy is probably to be found in the necessary calling out of love.[2]

So, too, it has become constantly more and more clear that our obligation, what we owe to others, is ourselves; and the giving of the self is love. It seems to be thrust home upon social workers everywhere that there is no solution of any social problem without a personal self-giving in some way on the part of some; that there is no cheaper way than this very costly one of love, of the giving of ourselves—whether in the family, or in charity, or in criminology.

The point, already noted, that the progress of society depends on leaders who will serve with unselfish devotion, is only another emphasis upon love as an indispensable element of the social consciousness.

And the social goal—equality, brotherhood, liberty, when these terms are given any adequate ethical content—is absolutely unthinkable in any really vital sense without love.

Any attempted definition of love, more-

[1] Cf. Drummond, *The Ascent of Man*, pp. 272 ff.

[2] Cf. John Fiske, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 74; Drummond, *Op. cit.*, p. 279 ff.

over, resolves at once into what we mean by the social consciousness. If we define love as the giving of self, this is exactly what, with growing clearness and insistence, the social consciousness demands. If with Herrmann we call love, "joy in personal life"—joy, that is, in the revelation of personal life, this can only come in that trustful, reverent, self-surrendering association to which the social consciousness exhorts. If with Edwards we call love, willing the highest and completest good of all, we reach the same result. Or if with Christ in the Beatitudes, or with Paul in the thirteenth of I Corinthians, we study the characteristics of love, we shall hardly doubt that a complete social consciousness must have these marks of love.

These elements, then, make up the social consciousness: the sense of like-mindedness, of mutual influence, of the value and sacredness of the person, of obligation, and of love; and all these, with their implied demands, only point to what a person must be if he is to be fully personal.

With this definition in mind, we may now ask, whether the analogy of the organism can adequately express the social consciousness.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE INADEQUACY OF THE ANALOGY OF THE ORGANISM AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS*[1]

### I. THE VALUE OF THE ANALOGY

THE analogy of the organism has played so large a part in the history of thought, especially in the consideration of ethical and social questions, that it is well worth while to ask exactly how far this analogy is adequate, although the danger of the abuse of the analogy is probably somewhat less than formerly.

It may be said at once that it is, undoubtedly, the very best illustration of these social relations that we can draw from nature, and it is of real value. It has had, moreover, as already indicated, a most influential and largely honorable history in the development of the thought of men. Its classical expression is in the epoch-making twelfth chapter of I Corinthians, which makes so plain the ethical applications of the analogy.

[1] Cf. King, *Op. cit.*, pp. 92 ff., 179.

## II. THE INEVITABLE INADEQUACY OF THE ANALOGY

1. *Comes from the Sub-personal World.*—But it ought clearly to be seen, on the other hand, that, considered as a complete expression of the social consciousness, it is necessarily inadequate; and it is of moment that we should not be dominated by it. Too often it has been made to cover the entire ground, as though in itself it were a complete expression and final explanation of the social consciousness, instead of a quite incomplete illustration. For, in the first place, the very fact that the analogy comes from the physical world, from the sub-personal realm, makes it certain that it must fail at vital points in the expression of what is peculiarly a personal and ethical fact. We cannot safely argue directly from the physical illustration to ethical propositions.

2. *Access to Reality, Only Through Ourselves.*—Moreover, in this day of extraordinary attention to the physical world, it is particularly important that we should keep constantly in mind that we have direct access to reality only in ourselves; that man is himself necessarily the only key which we can use for any

ultimate understanding of anything; or, as Paulsen puts it, "I know reality as it is in itself, in so far as I am real myself, or in so far as it is, or is like, that which I am, namely, spirit."[1] We are not to forget that, in very truth, we know *better* what we mean by persons and personal relations, than we do what we mean by members of a body and by organic relations; and, further, that in point of fact, all those metaphysical notions by which we strive to think things are ultimately derived from ourselves; and that then we illogically turn back upon our own minds, from which all these notions came, to explain the mind in the same secondary way in which we explain other things.

3. *Mistaken Passion for Construing Everything.*—Natural science, with its sole problem of the tracing of immediate causal connections, naturally provokes a persistent, but nevertheless thoroughly mistaken, "passion," as Lotze calls it,[2] "for construing everything," —even the most real and final reality, spirit; which wishes to see even this real and final reality explained as the mechanical result of the combination of simpler elements, them-

[1] *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 373.
[2] *The Microcosmus*, Vol. I, p. 262.

selves, it is to be noted, finally absolutely inexplicable. Such perverse attempts will be widely hailed, by many who do not understand themselves, as highly scientific. And one who refuses to enter upon such investigations will be criticized by such minds as "hardly getting into grips with his subject."

But it is a false application of the scientific instinct that leads one to seek mechanical explanation for the final reality, or that urges to precision of formulation beyond that warranted by the data. It is from exactly this falsely scientific bias that theology needs deliverance. "For," as Aristotle reminds us, "it is the mark of a man of culture to try to attain exactness in each kind of knowledge just so far as the nature of the subject allows." There is a wise agnosticism that is violated alike by negative and by positive dogmatism. It is often overlooked that there is an over-wise radicalism that assumes a knowledge of the depth of the finite and infinite, quite as insistent and dogmatic as the view it supposes itself to be opposing. "I know it is not so," it ought not to need to be said, is not agnosticism.

The guiding principle in a truly scientific theology is this, as Lotze suggests: Just

so far as changing action depends upon altering conditions, we have explanatory and constructive problems to solve, and no farther. No philosophical view can do without a simply given reality. And we shall never succeed in understanding by what machinery reality is manufactured—in "deducing the whole positive content of reality from mere modifications of formal conditions."[1]

We shall not allow ourselves to be misled, therefore, by the scientific sound of the *detailed* application of the analogy of the organism to the facts of the social consciousness. And it is a satisfaction to see that the clearest sociological writers are coming to agree that there is strictly no "social mind" that can be affirmed to exist as a separate reality, supposed to answer to society conceived in its totality as an organism.

### III. THE ANALOGY TESTED BY THE DEFINITION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

When, now, we test the analogy of the organism by its competency to express the full meaning of the social consciousness, as it has been defined, we must say that the

[1] Lotze, *The Microcosmus*, Vol. II, pp. 649 ff.

analogy but feebly expresses the likeness of men; it best expresses the inevitableness of mutual influence, though even here there is no understandable ultimate explanation; it fairly expresses the desirableness and indispensableness of mutual influence, but, of course, with entire lack of ethical meaning; and it quite fails to express the sense of the value and the sacredness of the person, the sense of obligation, and the sense of love. We need to see and feel exactly these shortcomings, if we are not to abuse the analogy. There is no social consciousness that will hold water that does not rest on what Phillips Brooks called "a healthy and ineradicable individualism," in the sense of the recognition of the fully personal. We are spirits, not organisms, and society is a society of persons, not an organism, in a strict sense. Why should we wish to make society less significant than it is?

## CHAPTER III

### *THE NECESSITY OF THE FACTS, OF WHICH THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE REFLECTION, IF IDEAL INTERESTS ARE TO BE SUPREME*

### I. THE QUESTION

WITH this positive and negative definition of the social consciousness in our minds, a third question immediately suggests itself to one who wishes to go to the bottom of our theme. Why must the facts, of which the social consciousness is the reflection, be as they are if ideal interests are to be supreme? What has a theodicy to say as to these facts? Why, that is, from the point of view of the ideal—of religion and theology—why are we constituted so alike? so that we must influence one another? so that the results of our actions necessarily go over into the lives of others? so that the innocent suffer with the guilty and the guilty profit with the righteous? so that we must recognize everywhere the claim of others? so that we must respect their personality? and so that we must love them?

## II. OTHERWISE NO MORAL WORLD AT ALL

The answer to all these world-old questions may perhaps be contained in the single statement, that otherwise we should have no moral world at all. There would be no thinkable moral universe, but rather as many worlds as there are individuals, having no more to do with one another than the chemical reactions going on in a set of test-tubes.

1. *The Prerequisites of a Moral World.* For our human thinking, assuredly, there are certain prerequisites, that the world may be at all a sphere for moral training and action. What are these prerequisites for a moral world? There must be, in the first place, a *sphere of universal law*, to count on, within which all actions take place. In a lawless world, action could hardly take on any significance—least of all ethical significance. That freedom itself should mean anything in outward expression, there must be the possibility of intelligent use of means toward the ends chosen.

There must be, in the second place, some *real ethical freedom*, some power of moral initiative. We need not quarrel about the terms used; but, as Paulsen intimates, no serious

ethical writer ever doubted that men have at least some power to shape their own characters.[1] Without that assumption, we have a whole world of ideas and ideals—many of them the realest facts in the world to us—that have no legitimate excuse for being, that are simple insanities of the most inexplicable sort. The very meaning of the personality, indeed, which the social consciousness must demand for men, is some real existence for self, that is, some real self-consciousness and moral initiative.

And freedom is not enough; there must be also *some power of accomplishment.* To ascribe mere volition to man seems, it has been justly said, sophistical. Results are needed to reveal the character of our acts, even to ourselves—to make that character real. Lotze's charge that the world is imperfect because it might have been so made that only good designs could be carried out, or so that the results of evil volitions would be at once corrected,[2] is itself similarly sophistical. Such a world, in which the outward results of action never appear, would be but a play-world after all—only a nursery of babes not

[1] *System of Ethics* pp. 467 ff.
[2] *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 125.

yet capable of character. It could be no fit world for moral training.

And still more, not less, must this law of the necessary results of actions hold in our relations to other persons. There can be, least of all, a moral universe where we are not *members one of another*. Character, in any form we can conceive it, could not then exist. Our best, as well as our worst, possibilities are involved in these necessary mutual relations. Moral character has meaning only in personal relations. The results, therefore, which follow upon action, if the character of our deed is to have reality for us, must be chiefly personal. The realm of character has fearful possibilities. This *is* no play-world. We can cause and be caused suffering, and our sin necessarily carries the suffering, if not the sin, of others with it.

2. *The Ideal World Requires, thus, the Facts of the Social Consciousness.*— All this could be changed in any vital way only by shutting up every soul absolutely to itself, and with that result life has simply ceased.

For we cannot really conceive a person as having any reason for being without such relations. He would be constantly baffled at every point, for he is made for persons and

personal relations. Love, too, the highest source of both character and happiness, requires everywhere personal relations. Religion itself, as a sharing of the life of God, would be impossible without some relation to others; for God, at least, could not be separated from the life of all. That is, persons, love, religion, in such a world, have gone.

This, then, simply means that the ideal world ceases to be, with the denial of the facts that the social consciousness reflects. We must be full persons, social beings in the entire meaning demanded by the social consciousness — hard as the consequences involved often are — if ideal interests are to be supreme. Indeed, the very moral judgment, that incessantly prompts the problem of evil for every one of us, is required, for its own existence, to assume the validity of the relations about which it questions. For it complains, for the most part, of those facts that follow inevitably from the necessary mutual influence of men; but the chief sources of the joy it requires, that it may justify the world, lie in these same mutual relations. It assumes, thus, in its claims on the world, the validity and worth of the very relations of

which it complains in its criticism of the world. Or, slightly to vary the statement, the major premise, even of pessimism, is that a really justifiable world must have worth in the joy it yields in personal life, impossible out of the personal relations of a real moral universe. And there can be no moral universe without the facts reflected in the social consciousness. The ideal world requires, then, the facts of the social consciousness.

## CHAPTER IV

### *THE ULTIMATE EXPLANATION AND GROUND OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS*

THE most important and fundamental inquiry as to the possible help of theology to the social consciousness still remains: What is the ultimate explanation and ground of the social consciousness? This question includes two: (1) How can it be metaphysically that we do influence one another? (2) What is required for the final positive justification of the social consciousness as ethical? Theology's answer to both questions is found in the being and character of God, the creative and moral source of all.

### I. HOW CAN IT BE, METAPHYSICALLY, THAT WE DO INFLUENCE ONE ANOTHER?

First, then, how can it be that we do influence one another? What is the final explanation of the constant fact of our reciprocal action? For in our final thinking we may not ignore this question.

1. *Not Due to the Physical Fact of Race-Connection.*— It may be worth while saying, first, that the physical fact of race-connection, if that could be proved, would be no sufficient explanation. The race may, or may not, be dependent upon a single pair, but in any case this is not the essential connection. The race is one by virtue of its essential likeness, however that comes about. Men might have sprung out of the ground in absolute individual independence of one another, and yet if there were such actual like-mindedness as now exists, the race would be as truly one as it now is, and as capable of reciprocal action, and its members under the same obligation to one another. No ideal interest is at stake, then, in the question of the actual physical unity of the race as descended from one pair.

One may say, of course, that the physical unity of the race would naturally result, according to the laws apparently prevailing in the animal world, in likeness. And this may, therefore, seem to him the most natural proximate explanation. But, even so, it is well to know that our entire *moral* interest is in the essential likeness and mutual influence of men, however brought about, and

not in the physical unity of men. Theology has no occasion to continue its earlier excessive and quite fundamental emphasis upon this physical unity. Moreover, such an explanation is necessarily but proximate. Back of it lies the deeper question, Why just these laws, and modes of procedure?

2. *We are not to Over-Emphasize the Principle of Heredity.*—Nor can theology, from any point of view, afford to over-emphasize the principle of heredity if it wishes to keep human initiative at all. It is a dangerous alliance which the old-school theology with its racial sin in Adam has been so ready to make with the principle of heredity. That principle, as they wish to use it, proves quite too much; and careful thinkers, really awake to ideal interests, may well rejoice in the comparative relief which science itself, through the probably somewhat exaggerated protest of the Weismann or Neo-Darwinian school, seems likely to afford from the incubus of a grossly exaggerated heredity. The main interest for the ideal view lies right here. We can see why this law of the "inheritance of acquired characteristics," in Professor James' language, "*should not* be verified in the human race, and why, therefore, in looking for evi-

dence on the subject, we should confine ourselves exclusively to lower animals. In them fixed habit is the essential and characteristic law of nervous action. The brain grows to the exact modes in which it has been exercised, and the inheritance of these modes—then called instincts—would have in it nothing surprising. But in man the negation of all fixed modes is the essential characteristic. He owes his whole preëminence as a reasoner, his whole human quality of intellect, we may say, to the facility with which a given mode of thought in him may suddenly be broken up into elements, which re-combine anew. Only at the price of inheriting no settled instinctive tendencies is he able to settle every novel case by the fresh discovery by his reason of novel principles. He is, *par excellence*, the educable animal."[1]

To over-emphasize the principle of heredity, then, is to strike at one of the most fundamental distinctive human qualities, and so to endanger every ideal interest. The growing like-mindedness of men and their mutual influence are not forthwith to be ascribed to an omnipotent principle of heredity.

[1]James, *Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 367, 368.

3. *Not Due to a Mystical Solidarity.*—Nor is the mutual influence of men to be explained by any mystical solidarity of the race considered as a *finite* whole. It is a simple and reasonable scientific demand, that we should not assume a mysterious, indefinable and incalculable cause, where known and intelligible causes suffice to explain the phenomena in question. Do we need, or can we intelligently use, a mystical solidarity? The only solidarity of the race which we seem really to need, or with which we seem able intelligently to deal, is the actual like-mindedness and the actual personal relations themselves—the reciprocal action of spirits—the only kind of reciprocal action which we can finally fully conceive. Any other finite solidarity than this, though it has often figured in theology, seems to me only a name without significance. In any case, we need to insist in theology, much more than we have, upon that unity of the race which is due to the actual likeness of men and their actual mutual personal influence. Such a unity we know and can understand, and it is of the highest ethical and spiritual importance. But to make much of the physical unity is to ground the spiritual in the physical; and, on

the other hand, to take refuge in a mystical solidarity—and this is often felt to be a rather deep procedure—for whatever theological purpose, is to hide in the fog of the obscure and unintelligible.

4. *Grounded in the Immanence of God.*—But back of all finite phenomena, we may still ask for an ultimate explanation of the possibility of any reciprocal action even between spirits. And it is, perhaps, this ultimate explanation after which the idea of a mystical solidarity of the race is blindly groping. Unless one chooses to accept reciprocal action as a necessarily given fact in any universe (and this position, I think with F. C. S. Schiller, may be reasonably defended),[1] he must somewhere in his thinking ask for its final explanation. And most of those, who try to think things through, feel this pressure. And metaphysics, we do well to remember with Professor James, "means only an unusually obstinate attempt to think clearly and consistently."[2] As Lotze puts it: "How a cause begins to produce its *immediate* effect, how a condition is the foundation of its *direct* result, it will never be possible to say; yet

[1] *The Philosophical Review*, May, 1896, p. 228.
[2] *Psychology*, Briefer Course, p. 461.

that cause and effect *do* thus act must be reckoned among those simple facts that compose the reality which is the object of all our investigation. But there is an intolerable contradiction in the assumption that, though two beings may be wholly independent the one of the other, yet that which takes place in one can be a cause of change in the other; things that do not affect each other at all, cannot at the same time affect each other in such a manner that the one is guided by the other."[1]

This question is fairly thrust upon us by the facts of the social consciousness. How can it be that we do so influence one another? how is our reciprocal action metaphysically possible? The answer of theistic philosophy to this question is found in the being of God.

Upon the metaphysical side, theistic philosophy affirms that we can ascribe independent existence in the highest sense only to God. All else is absolutely dependent for its existence and maintenance upon him. The kind of reality that we demand for man is not that he be *outside* of God, independent of him; this would not make man more,

[1] *Microcosmus*, Vol. II, p. 599.

but less. Every thorough-going theistic view must have this at least in common with pantheism, that it recognizes everywhere a real immanence of God. We are, because God wills in us. This metaphysical relation of the finite to the infinite, to be sure, is not to be conceived spatially or materially; nor, least of all, is it be so conceived as to deny a real self-consciousness and a real moral initiative to the finite spirit; but it does involve the absolute dependence of all the finite upon the will of God. As to our *being*, we root solely in God. And the unity and consistency of the being of God are the actual ground of our possible reciprocal action. Only so is that contradiction of which Lotze spoke avoided. We are not independent of one another, because we are all alike dependent for our very being upon God. And we are thus members one of another, ultimately, only through him.

The further fact, that we are never fully able to trace causal connections anywhere; that even in the clearest case no possible analysis of one stage in the process enables us to prophesy, independently of experience, the next stage, also compels us to admit that the full cause is not really present in any of

the finite manifestations we can follow; that we have always to take account of the "hidden efficacy of the Infinite everywhere at work," and so must recognize once again the indubitable immanence of God, the absolute dependence of the finite upon his will, and our reciprocal action as possible only through him.[1]

Or, to put the same thing a little differently, any adequate theory of causality seems to lead us up inevitably to purpose in God. As Professor Bowne states it:[2] "The fundamental antithesis of purpose and causation is incorrect. The true antithesis is that of mechanical and volitional causality." And he intimates the probability that all causality, even in the physical world, is ultimately volitional. "It becomes a question," he says, "whether true causality can be found in the phenomenal at all, and not rather in a power beyond the phenomenal which incessantly posits and continues that order according to rule." The unity and consistency of the immanent will of God, then, are the ultimate metaphysical ground of all reciprocal action. The mutual influence, that is, even

[1] See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 54, 84, 102.
[2] *Theory of Thought and Knowledge*, pp. 91, 111.

of spirits, finds its final full explanation only in God.

The social consciousness, therefore, so far as it is an expression of the possibility and inevitableness of our mutual influence, is a reflection of the immanence of the one God in the unity and consistency of his life.

But this, after all, is not the most important element of the social consciousness. So far as it is *ethical* at all, it can have no final explanation in the metaphysical, considered as mere matter of fact. We are driven, therefore, to ask the second question involved in the subject of the chapter.

## II. WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE FINAL POSITIVE JUSTIFICATION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS ETHICAL?

1. *Must be Grounded in the Supporting Will of God.*—It is not enough that we should be able to think of the unity of One Life pervading all, or even of One Will upholding all. If the social consciousness, as distinctly ethical, is to have any final justification, it must be able to believe that it is in league with the eternal and universal forces; that the fundamental trend of the universe is its

own trend; in other words, that the deepest thing in the universe is an ethical purpose conceivable only in a Person; that the ideals and purposes of finite beings expressed in the social consciousness are in line with God's own; that the loving holy purpose of the Infinite Will quickens and sustains and surrounds our purposes.

Let us distinctly face the fact that, unless the social consciousness can be so grounded in the very foundation of the universe, it must remain an illogical and unjustifiable fragment in the world, without real excuse for being. That is, if the social consciousness is not to be an illusion, it must be, as Professor Nash contends, cosmical, and not merely individual, and ethics must root in religion. This is the very heart of his stimulating book, *Ethics and Revelation*, expressed, for example, in such sentences as these: "Nothing save a sense of deep and intimate connection with the solid core of things, nothing save a settled and fervid conviction that the universe is on the side of the will in its struggle for that whole-hearted devotion for the welfare of the race, without which morality is an affair of shreds and patches, can give to the will the force and edge suitable to the difficult

work it has to do. But this sense of kinship with what is deepest and most abiding in the universe — what else is meant by pure religion." And again: "We, as founders and builders of the true society, find ourselves shut up to an impassioned faith in the sincerity of the universe and the integrity of the fundamental being. Our religion is a deep and wide synthesis of feeling, whereby that personal will in us, which grounds society, comes into solemn league and covenant with the fundamental being. Here is the focus-point of the prophetic revelation. At this point, the deep in God answers to the deep in Man. . . . All that He is He puts in pledge for the perfecting of the society He has founded."[1]

Paulsen expresses only the same fundamental conviction, from the point of view of the philosopher, and, at the same time, the heart of his own solution of the relation between knowledge and faith, when he says: "There is one item, at least, in which every man goes beyond mere knowledge, beyond the registration of facts. That is his own life and his future. His life has a meaning for him, and he directs it toward something

[1] *Ethics and Revelation*, pp. 50, 243, 244.

which does not yet exist, but which will exist by virtue of his will. Thus a faith springs up by the side of his knowledge. He believes in the realization of this, his life's aim, if he is at all in earnest about it. Since, however, his aim is not an isolated one, but is included in the historical life of a people, and finally in that of humanity, he believes also in the future of his people, in the victorious future of truth and righteousness and goodness in humanity. Whoever devotes his life to a cause believes in that cause, and this belief, be his creed what it may, has always something of the form of a religion. Hence faith infers that an inner connection exists between the real and the valuable within the domain of history, and believes that in history something like an immanent principle of reason or justice favors the right and the good, and leads it to victory over all resisting forces." And Paulsen holds that this implicit faith characterizes necessarily *every* philosophical theory. "What the philosopher himself accepts as the highest good and final goal he projects into the world as its good and goal, and then believes that subsequent reflections also reveal it to him in the world."[1]

[1] *Introduction to Philosophy*, pp. 8, 9, 313.

We must be able, then, to believe that the best we know — our highest ideals — are at home in the world, or give up all faith in the honesty of the world, and all hope of philosophy, to say nothing of religion. Ultimately, now, this means that nothing short of full Christian conviction is needed to support the social consciousness. We need to be able to believe that the spirit of the life and death of Christ is at the very heart of the world. Nothing less will suffice. And this is exactly the support which the Christian revelation offers to the social consciousness.

2. *God's Sharing in Our Life.* — But if the social consciousness is only a true reflection of God's own desire and purpose, then in a sense far deeper than the merely metaphysical, our life is the very life of God. He shares in it. And no man can really see what that means, and not find a new light falling on all the world, and himself carried on to take up a new confession of faith in the solemn words of another: "For the agony of the world's struggle is the very life of God. Were he mere spectator, perhaps, he too would call life cruel. But in the unity of our lives with his, our joy is his joy, our pain is his." And from the vision of this

self-giving life of God we turn back to our own place of service, saying with Matheson: "If Thou art love then Thy best gift must be sacrifice; in that light let me search Thy world."[1]

We probably cannot better express this unity of our highest ethical life with the life of God than by renewing our old faith that we are children of a common Father, who have come, under God's own leading—so far as a social consciousness is ours—voluntarily to share in God's loving purpose in the creation and redemption of men. We do not work alone; nay, we are co-workers with God.

3. *The Consequent Transfiguration of the Social Consciousness.*—And as soon as we have thus really and deeply come into the meaning of Christ's thought of God as Father, and into his revelation in his life and death as to what the spirit of that Fatherhood is, we turn back to the elements of our social consciousness to find them all transfigured.

Our *likeness* is the likeness of common children of God reflecting the image of the one Father, capable of character and of indefinite progress into the highest.

[1] *Searchings in the Silence*, p. 46.

Our *mutual influence* roots in a real Fatherhood, both in source of being and in the one purpose of love, alike creating and redemptively working for all.

Our *sense of the value and sacredness of the person* now for the first time gets its full justification. Men are not only creatures capable of joying and suffering, but children of God with a preciousness to be interpreted only in the light of Christ, and with the "power of the endless life" upon them. Concerning the value of the person, it is worth stopping just here, to notice that it is peculiarly true of the social consciousness, that it is not free to ignore such considerations upon immortality as those which weighed most with John Stuart Mill and Sully. Of the hope of immortality, Mill says: "The beneficial influence of such a hope is far from trifling. It makes life and human nature a far greater thing to the feelings, and gives greater strength as well as greater solemnity to all the sentiments which are awakened in us by our fellow-creatures, and by mankind at large." And Sully adds: "I would only say that if men are to abandon all hope of a future life, the loss, in point of cheering and sustaining influence, will be a vast one, and

one not to be made good, so far as I can see, by any new idea of services to collective humanity."[1]

Our *sense of obligation* deepens with all this deepening of the value of men, and our conscience becomes only a true response to God's own life and character—in no mere figurative sense the voice of God in us.

And our *love* becomes simply entering a little way into God's own love, a sharing more and more in his life.

And when one has once seen the social consciousness so transfigured in the light of Christ's revelation, he must believe that then, for the first time, he has seen the social consciousness at its highest, and that it is impossible for him to go back to the lower ideal. If the social consciousness is not an illusion, Christ's thought of God and of the life with God ought to be true; and if the world is an honest world, it is true. It is not only true that Christ has a social teaching, but that the social consciousness absolutely requires Christ's teaching for its own final justification. The Christian truth *is* so great that it alone can give the social consciousness its fullest

[1] Quoted by Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World*, pp. 160, 72.

meaning, alone can enable it to understand itself, and alone can give it adequate motive and power; for, in Keim's words, "to-day, to-morrow, and forever we can know nothing better than that God is our Father, and that the Father is the rest of our souls."[1]

[1] Quoted by Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 157.

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS UPON THE CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

## INTRODUCTION

FROM the question of the support which Christian faith and doctrine give to the social consciousness, we turn now to the second part of our inquiry: How does this growing social consciousness, not by any means always consciously religious, naturally react upon and affect our conceptions of religion and of theological doctrines?

In this inquiry, we cannot always be sure historically of the exact connection, and, for our present purpose, this is not of prime importance. But we can see, for example, in this second division of our theme, the relations of religion and the social consciousness, and how religion must be conceived if the social consciousness is fully warranted; and this is the main question.

If the definition of theology which has

been suggested be adopted — the thoughtful and unified expression of what religion means to us — then it is obvious that any change in conception or emphasis in religion will necessarily affect theological statement. Our inquiry as to the influence of the social consciousness, therefore, naturally begins with religion.

The discussions of this division, moreover, will really include all that part of theological doctrine which has to do with the growth into the life with God.

The natural influence of the social consciousness upon the conception of religion may be, perhaps, summed up in four points, which form the subjects of the four succeeding chapters: (1) The social consciousness tends to draw religion away from the falsely mystical; (2) it tends to emphasize the personal relation in religion, and so keeps the truly mystical; (3) it tends to emphasize the ethical in religion; (4) it tends to emphasize the concretely historically Christian in religion.

## CHAPTER V

### *THE OPPOSITION OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE FALSELY MYSTICAL*

#### I. WHAT IS THE FALSELY MYSTICAL?

TWO very clear answers made from different points of view deserve attention.

1. *Nash's Definition.*— In trying to set forth the "main mood and motives of religious speculation" in the early Christian centuries, Professor Nash takes, as perhaps the two strongest influences in determining the type of man to whom Christian apologetics had then to appeal, Philo and Plotinus, and says: "By what road shall the mind enter into a deep and intimate knowledge of God? That is the decisive question. Plotinus the Gentile and Philo the Jew are at one in their answer. The reason must rise above reasoning. It must pass into a state that is half a swoon and half an ecstasy before it can truly know God. Philo gave up for the sake of his theory, the position of the prophets. Plotinus, for the same theory,

forsook the position of Plato and Aristotle. The prophets conceived the inmost essence of things, the being and will of God, as a creative and redemptive force that guided and revealed itself through the career of a great national community. Plato and Aristotle conceived the essence of life as a labor of reason; and, for them, the labors of reason found their sufficient refreshment and inspiration in those moments of clear synthesis which are the reward of patient analysis. Revelation came to the prophet through his experience of history. To the philosopher it came through hard and steady thinking. But Philo and Plotinus together declared these roads to be no thoroughfares. The Greek and the Jew met on the common ground of a mysticism that sacrificed the needs of sober reason and the needs of the nation to the necessities of the monk."[1] Mysticism is here conceived as unethical, unhistorical, and unrational.

2. *Herrmann's Definition.*—Herrmann's definition of mysticism is the second one to which attention is directed. He says: "When the influence of God upon the soul is sought and found solely in an inward experience of the

[1] Nash, *Ethics and Revelation*, p. 33.

individual; when certain excitements of the emotions are taken, with no further question, as evidence that the soul is possessed by God; when, at the same time, nothing external to the soul is consciously and clearly perceived and firmly grasped; when no thoughts that elevate the spiritual life are aroused by the positive contents of an idea that rules the soul—then that is the piety of mysticism. He who seeks in this wise that for the sake of which he is ready to abandon all beside, has stepped beyond the pale of Christian piety. He leaves Christ and Christ's Kingdom altogether behind him when he enters that sphere of experience which seems to him to be the highest."[1] The marks of mysticism for Herrmann, then, are: that it is purely subjective; that it is merely emotional and unethical; and hence that it has no clear object, and is abstract, unrational, unhistorical, and so unchristian.

## II. THE OBJECTIONS OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE FALSELY MYSTICAL

Against this neo-platonic, falsely mystical conception of religion, the social conscious-

[1] Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*, pp. 19, 20.

ness seems to be clearly arrayed, and, so far as the social consciousness influences religion, it will certainly tend to draw it away from this falsely mystical idea.

1. *Unethical.*—For, in the first place, this neo-platonic conception of religion has nothing distinctly ethical in it. The ethical is manifestly not made the test of true religious experience, as it is in the New Testament. The social consciousness, on the other hand, is predominantly and emphatically ethical, and can have nothing to do with a religion in which ethics is either omitted or is wholly subordinate. At this point, therefore, the pressure of the social consciousness is strongly against a neo-platonic mysticism.

2. *Does not Give a Real Personal God.*—In the second place, the social consciousness cannot get along with the falsely mystical, because it does not give a real personal God. Let us be clear upon this point. Is not Herrmann right when he says that all that can be said of the God of this mysticism is "that he is not the world? Now that is precisely all that mysticism has ever been able to say of God as it conceives him. Plainly, the world and the conception of it are all that moves the soul while it thinks thus of God. Only

disappointment can ensue to the soul whose yearning for God in such case keeps on insisting that God must be something utterly different from the world. If such a soul will reflect awhile on the nature of the God thus reached, the fact must inevitably come to the surface that its whole consciousness is occupied with the world now as it was before, for evidently it has grasped no positive ideas—nothing but negative ideas—about anything else. Mysticism frequently passes into pantheism for this very reason, even in men of the highest religious energy; they refuse to be satisfied with the mere longing after God, or to remain on the way to him, but determine to reach the goal itself, and rest with God himself."[1]

Now we have already seen that the social consciousness can find adequate support and power and motive only in faith that its purpose is God's purpose, that the deepest thing in the universe is an ethical purpose, conceivable only in a personal God; and, therefore, neither an empty negation nor pantheism can ever satisfy it.

3. *Belittles the Personal in Man.*—The false mysticism, moreover, belittles the personal in

[1] Herrmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

man as well as in God; for it does not treat with real reverence either the personality, the ethical freedom, the sense of obligation, or the reason of man. This whole thought of "a state that is half a swoon and half an ecstasy" is a sort of swamping of clear self-consciousness and definite moral initiative, in which the very reality of man's personality consists. It is a heathen, not a Christian, idea of inspiration which demands the suppression of the human, whether in consciousness, in will, in reason, or by belittling the sense of obligation to others. But mysticism has at least tended toward failure in all these respects.

And yet, from the time that Paul argued with the Corinthians against their immense overestimation of the gift of speaking with tongues, this fascination of the merely mystical has been felt in Christianity. (1) The very mystery and unintelligibility of the experience, (2) its ecstatic emotion, (3) its sense of being controlled by a power beyond one's self, and (4) its contrast with ordinary life—all these elements make the mystical experience seem to most all the more divine, although in so judging they are applying a pagan, not a Christian, standard. So far as these experi-

ences have value, it is probably due to the strong and realistic sense which they give of being in the presence of an overpowering being. If thoroughly permeated and dominated with other elements, this sense is not without its value.

But it is interesting to notice that, although Paul does not deny the legitimacy of the gift of speaking with tongues, he nevertheless absolutely subordinates it, and insists that the most ecstatic religious emotions are completely worthless without love. Evidently the considerations which weighed most with the Corinthians in valuing the gift of unintelligible ecstatic utterance weighed little with Paul; and one can see how Paul implicitly argues against each of those considerations: (1) God is not an unknown, mystic force, but the definite, concrete God of character, shown in Christ. (2) He speaks to reason and will as well as to feeling, and he best speaks to feeling when he speaks to the whole man. True religious emotion must have a rational basis and must move to duty. (3) Religion, he would urge, is a self-controlled and voluntary surrender to a personal God of character, not a passive being swept away by an unknown emotion. (4) God has most to give, be as-

sured, he would have added, in the *common* ways of life.

Now, in every one of these protests, the social consciousness instinctively joins. It cannot rest in a conception of religion that belittles the personal in God or man; for it is itself an emphatic insistence upon the fully personal. And it can, least of all, get on with the mystical ignoring of the rational and the ethical, for it holds that the social evolution moves steadily on to a rational like-mindedness, and to a definitely ethical civilization. Giddings puts the sociological conclusion in a sentence: "It is the rational, ethical consciousness that maintains social cohesion in a progressive democracy."[1] Now that which is clearly recognized as the goal in the relations of man to man will not be set aside as unwarranted or subordinate in the relations of man to God. And we may depend upon it.

4. *Leaves the Historically, Concretely Christian.*—Once more, the social consciousness cannot approve of the mystical conception of religion in its ignoring, in its highest state, the historically and concretely Christian. With mysticism's subjective, emotional, and

[1] Giddings, *Elements of Sociology*, p. 321; cf. also pp. 155 ff, 302, 320, 327.

abstract conception of the highest communion with God, and of the way thereto, the historical and concrete at best can be to it only subordinate means, more or less mysteriously connected with the attainment of the goal, and left behind when once the goal is reached.

The social consciousness, on the other hand, requires historical justification, and definitely builds on the facts of the historical social evolution.

In the case of the prophets and psalmists, for example, who alone in the ancient world most fully anticipated the modern social feeling, the social consciousness plainly arose in the face of the concrete historical life of a people. No result of modern Old Testament criticism is more certain. So that, speaking of "the religious aspects of the social struggle in Israel," McCurdy can use this strong language: "It is not too much to say that this conflict, intense, uninterrupted, and prolonged, is the very heart of the religion of the Old Testament, its most regenerative and propulsive movement. To the personal life of the soul, the only basis of a potential, world-moving religion, it gave energy and depth, assurance and hopefulness, repose and

self-control, with an outlook clear and eternal."[1] But it was this standpoint of the prophets that the falsely mystical conception of religion abandoned. We may well take to heart, in our estimate of mysticism, the gradual but steady elimination of ecstasy in the development of Israel, and its practically total absence in those we count in the highest sense prophets.[2]

The social consciousness, moreover, has almost entirely to do with men, and hence naturally must lay stress on human history, rather than on nature, as a source of religious ideas. Indeed, it will have no doubt that what nature is made to mean religiously will be chiefly determined by the prevalent social ideals. It can, therefore, least of all ignore the historical in Christianity.

The social consciousness recognizes increasingly, too, with the clearing of its own ideals and with the deepening study of the teaching of Jesus, that it really is only demanding, in the concrete, and in detailed application to particular problems, and to all of

[1] McCurdy, *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, Vol. II, p. 223; cf. pp. 214, ff.

[2] G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. I, pp. 30, 84, 89; Cornill, *The Prophets of Israel*, pp. 41, 46; *The Expository Times*, Jan., Feb., 1902, article, *Prophetic Ecstasy*.

them, the spirit shown in its fullness only in Christ, as Professor Peabody's eminently sane treatment of the social teaching of Jesus seems to me fairly to have proven. The social consciousness, therefore, cannot help becoming more and more consciously and emphatically Christian.

In a single sentence, because of the steps of its own long evolution, the social consciousness instinctively distrusts the highly emotional, unless it is manifestly under equally strong rational control, and unless it has equal ethical insight and power, and is historically justified. It tends, therefore, necessarily to draw away from the falsely mystical in religion, which is lacking in all these respects.

And the same reasons, which array the social consciousness against the falsely mystical in religion, lead it into natural sympathy with a positive emphasis upon the personal, the ethical, and the historically concretely Christian in religion.

## CHAPTER VI

### *THE EMPHASIS OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS UPON THE PERSONAL RELATION IN RELIGION, AND SO UPON THE TRULY MYSTICAL*

#### I. THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS TENDS POSITIVELY TO EMPHASIZE THE PERSONAL RELATION IN RELIGION

1. *Emphasizes Everywhere the Personal.*—The social consciousness sees man as preëminently the social animal, made for personal relations, irrevocably and essentially knit up with other persons. It deepens everywhere our sense of persons and of personal relations. It may be itself almost defined as the sense of the fully personal.

Religion, then, if it is to be most real to men of the social consciousness, must be personally conceived, that is, must be distinctly seen to be a personal relation of man to God. And this conception, as the highest we can reach, is to be followed fearlessly to the end; only guarding it against wrong inferences from the simple transference to God of finite conditions, and recognizing exactly in what

respects the personal relation to God is unique.[1]

The social consciousness, moreover, as we have seen, must have a conception of religion that can really justify the social consciousness, and, therefore, must do justice to the fully personal in God and man; and this need also leads the social consciousness naturally to the conception of religion as a personal relation.

2. *Requires the Laws of a Deepening Friendship in Religion.*—When this conception is carried out, it is found that growth in the religious life, in communion with God, follows the laws of a deepening friendship.[2] These laws can, therefore, be known and studied and formulated; and religion, at the same time, ceases to be unintelligible and ceases to be isolated—cut off from the rest of life, and becomes rather that one great fundamental relation which gives being and meaning and value to all the rest. In absolute harmony, then, with the genesis of the social consciousness, religion, in this conception, is bound up with the whole of life; and we catch a glimpse of the real and final unity

[1] Cf. King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, p. 201 ff.
[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 210 ff.

of life in true love, the relation to God and the relation to man each helping everywhere the other. If religion is truly a personal relation, and its laws are those of a deepening friendship, then every human relation, heartily and truly fulfilled, becomes a new outlook on God, a revelation of new possibilities in the religious life. And, on the other hand, in that mutual self-revelation and answering trust upon which every growing personal relation is built, every fresh revelation of God is an enlarging of our ideal for our relations to others. Even biblical literature, perhaps, furnishes no more perfect example of the interplay of the human and divine relations than Hosea's account of his own providential leading through the human relation into the divine, and back again from the divine to a still better human.

3. *Requires the Ideal Conditions of the Richest Life in Religion.*—And if religion is to be justified in its supreme claims by the social consciousness, it must be felt to offer, besides, the ideal conditions of the richest life. As a personal relation to God, religion need not shrink from this test. Our great needs are character and happiness. Psychology seems to me to point to two great means and to

two accompanying conditions of both character and happiness. The means are association and work; the corresponding conditions are reverence for personality, and objectivity —the mood of both love and work. The great essentials, therefore, to the richest life are (1) association in which personality is respected, and (2) work in which one can lose himself. Now, when would these conditions become ideal? On the one hand, as to association, when the association is with him who is of the highest character and of the infinitely richest life, and relation to whom is fundamental to every other personal relation; when, secondly, God is made concrete and real to us in an adequate personal revelation of his character, and of his love toward us; and when, third, the association is individualized for each one, who throws himself open to God, in God's spiritual presence in us, constantly and intimately, and yet *unobtrusively*, coöperating with us. And, on the other hand, as to work, when the work is God-given work, to which one is set apart, and in which he may lose himself with joy. These are the ideal conditions of the richest life. Just these ideal conditions Jesus declared actualities. For the fulfilment of just these, in the case

of his disciples, he prayed in his double petition,—"Keep them," "Sanctify them." "Keep them in thy name," that is, through the divine association. "Sanctify them"—set them apart unto their God-given work. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Such a conception of religion can fairly claim to meet, broadly and deeply, the most exacting demands of the social consciousness for emphasis upon the personal relation in religion.

## II. THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS THUS KEEPS THE TRULY MYSTICAL

I have no predilection for the term mystical, and would gladly confine it to what I have termed the neo-platonic or falsely mystical, were it not that, in spite of the dictionaries and the histories of philosophy and the histories of doctrine, the term is used in two quite different senses. Many, it seems to me, are defending what they call the mystical in religion, who have no idea of defending what Herrmann and Nash call mystical. And many, on the other hand, are defending and teaching the falsely mystical through an undefined fear that else they will lose the truly

mystical. Theology and religion both greatly need a clear discrimination of terms here. Many are involved, in both living and thinking, in a self-contradiction, which they feel but cannot state; and are urging with themselves and with others a means of religious life and a corresponding method of conception, which really contradict their highest convictions in other lines of life and thought. Can we find our way out of this confusion?

If one studies carefully the historical representatives of mysticism, and especially such a strong type as Jacob Böhme, whom Erdmann calls the "culmination of mysticism," and still keeps his head, certain dangers in mysticism, it would seem, must become apparent. And it may be worth while to attempt a brief, but definite, analysis of the justifiable and unjustifiable elements in these mystical movements.

1. *The Justifiable and Unjustifiable Elements in Mysticism.*—(1) The first danger in mysticism seems to me to be the tendency to make simple emotion the supreme test of the religious state. Whether this emotion is thought of as ecstatic—such as some of the old mystics called "being drunk with God," or, as quietistic—in which imperturba-

bility, passionlessness, become the highest good—is comparatively indifferent. The justifiable element here is the insistence that religion is real and is life; for feeling is perhaps the most powerful element in the sense of reality. So James says: "Speaking generally, the more a conceived object excites us, the more reality it has."[1] The unjustifiable element is the perilous subjection of the rational and ethical. Such a view must always lack any positive and adequate conception of our active life and vocation in the world.

(2) A second closely connected danger in mysticism is the tendency toward mere subjectivism. There is here a justifiable element in the emphasis on one's own personal conviction and faith; an unjustifiable element in the tendency to underrate anything but the purely subjective, to ignore all correcting influences from others, from the church, and from the Scriptures.

(3) A third danger follows from this: the marked tendency to underestimate the historical. The justifiable element here is, again, the emphasis on personal conviction and faith; the unjustifiable element is the

[1] James, *Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 307.

tendency toward the greatest one-sidedness, and toward emptiness, especially of ethical content. Advising our young people simply to "listen to God," without the strongest insistence upon the historical revelation of God at the same time, is exposing them to the great danger of mistaking for an indubitable, divine revelation the veriest vagary that may chance in their empty-mindedness next to come into their thought. With the reason in supposed abeyance, the door is thus thrown open to the grossest superstitions. Honest attempts to deepen the religious life may thus become dangerous assaults upon true religion.

(4) A fourth danger in mysticism is so strong a tendency toward vagueness, that the common mind is not without warrant in identifying mysticism and mistiness. The justifiable element here is in the real difficulty of expressing the full content of the entire religious experience; the unjustifiable element is, once more, the slighting of the historical, the ethical, and the rational, especially in talking much of the contradictions of reason, and of what is above reason. Mysticism naturally lacks positive content.

(5) Another danger—the tendency toward

pantheism — comes in partly, as Herrmann has suggested, as a meeting of this lack of content, and partly as the logical outcome of such an insistence upon losing oneself in God as amounts to a being swept out of one's self — a loss of clear and rational self-consciousness, which is next interpreted speculatively as a real absorption in God, and is then made the goal. This is the familiar road of Indian and neo-platonic mysticism, and its phenomena are real enough, but probably of only the slightest religious significance. Tennyson tells somewhere of the immense sense of illumination that came to him once from simply repeating monotonously his own name—"Alfred Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson." This may be as effective as looking at the end of one's nose and ceaselessly reiterating "Om," as does the Hindu ascetic. A still shorter and more certain method is through nitrous-oxide-gas intoxication, of which Professor James says: "With me, as with every other person of whom I have heard, the key-note of the experience is the tremendously exciting sense of an intense metaphysical illumination. Truth lies open to the view in depth beneath depth of almost blinding evidence. The mind sees all the

logical relations of being with an apparent subtlety and instantaneity, to which its normal consciousness offers no parallel; only as sobriety returns, the feeling of insight fades, and one is left staring vacantly at a few disjointed words and phrases as one stares at a cadaverous-looking snow-peak from which the sunset glow has just fled, or at the black cinder left by an extinguished brand." "The immense emotional sense of reconciliation," he felt to be the characteristic mood. "It is impossible to convey," he says, "an idea of the torrential character of the identification of opposites as it streams through the mind in this experience."[1]

Now it is not safe to ignore such facts, when we are seriously trying to estimate the religious significance of intense emotional experiences, the reality of which we need not at all question. The vital question is, not that of the reality of the experiences, but that of the real cause of the experiences; and the only possible test of this is rational and ethical. But from this test, mysticism tends from the start to shut itself off, and so, assuming the experience to be truly religious, ends often in virtual pantheism

[1] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp. 294, 295.

The justifiable element in this insistence upon absorption in God is the necessary moral relation of complete surrender to God. The unjustifiable element is in belittling the personal in both God and man, and in making essentially religious an experience that has almost nothing of the rational and ethical in it, and that, on that very account, fosters the irreverent familiarity with Christ so deplored by more than one careful student of mysticism. A natural and common and most dangerous accompaniment of such an intense emotional experience is the tendency afterward, to excuse sin in oneself. In the case of the most conscientious, it is worth noting, such an emphasis upon intense experiences tends to lead them to distrust the reality of the normal Christian experience if they have not had these intense emotions, or if they have had them, tends to bring them into despair when they find these marked experiences actually proving less powerful in effects upon life than they had expected.

(6) The last danger in mysticism, to which reference will be made, is the tendency to extravagant symbolism. This is closely connected with "the immense emotional sense of reconciliation," and is much stronger by

nature in some than in others. The born mystic finds his own subjective views symbolized everywhere, and is in grave danger of being led into an ingenious, practically unconscious intellectual dishonesty. The justifiable element here is that sense of the unity and worth of things which is the most fundamental conviction of our minds. The unjustifiable element has been sufficiently indicated.

The justifiable elements in mysticism, then, may be said to include: the insistence on the legitimate place of feeling in religion as a real and vital experience; the emphasis on one's own conviction and faith; the real difficulty of expressing the full meaning of the religious experience; the demand for a complete ethical surrender to God; and the faith in the real unity and worth of the world in God. Now if one tries to bring together these justifiable elements in mysticism, the truly mystical may all be summed up as simply a protest in favor of the whole man—the entire personality. It says that men can experience and live and feel and do much more than they can logically formulate, define, explain, or even fully express. Living is more than thinking.

2. *The Protest in Favor of the Whole Man.*— The element to which mysticism has tried most to do justice is feeling, and so it has been liable to a new and dangerous one-sidedness. But the truly mystical must be a protest alike against a narrow juiceless intellectualism, against a narrow moralistic rigorism, and against a blind and spineless sentimentalism. It is a protest particularly against making the mathematico-mechanical view of the world the only view; against making logical consistency the sole test of truth or reality; against ignoring all data, except those which come through the intellect alone; that is, against trying to make a part, not the whole, of man the standard; in other words, against ignoring the data which come through feeling and will—emotional, æsthetic, ethical, and religious data, as well as those judgments of worth which underlie reason's theoretical determinations.

Man stands, in fact, everywhere face to face with an actual world of great complexity, that seems to him at first what James says the baby's world is, "one big blooming buzzing confusion;" "and the universe of all of us is still to a great extent such a confusion, potentially resolvable, and demanding to be

resolved, but not yet actually resolved, into parts."[1] In one sense, man's whole task is to think unity and order into this confusion. The problem really becomes that of thinking the universe through in several kinds of terms, and then finally bringing all together into one comprehensive view. All these are alike ideals which the mind sets before itself. The easiest of these problems is the attempt to think the world through, in mathematico-mechanical terms. But the attempt to think the world through in æsthetic or ethical or religious terms is equally legitimate, though it is more difficult. Not only, then, is the mathematico-mechanical view not the sole justifiable view, but it really has its justification in an ideal, and success in this attempt affords just encouragement for the hope of success in the other more difficult problems.[2]

The truly mystical holds, then, that the narrow intellectualism is unwarranted, because natural science, the mechanical view of the world, is itself an ideal—the "child of duties," as Münsterberg calls it—and so cannot legitimately rule out other ideals;

[1] *Psychology*, Briefer Course, p. 16.

[2] Cf. James, *Psychology*, Vol. II, 633–677; especially 633, 634, 667, 671, 677; Münsterberg, *Psychology and Life*, pp. 23-28.

because we have just as immediate a conviction concerning the worth, as concerning the logical consistency of the world; because a narrow intellectualism would make conscious life but a "barren rehearsal" of the outer world, without significance; because if we can trust the indications of our intellect, we ought to be able to trust the indications of the rest of our nature; and because, thus, the only possible key and standard of truth and reality are in ourselves—the whole self, and "necessities of thought" become necessities of a reason which means loyally to take account of all the data of the entire man.

And the same point may be thus stated. We use the word rational in two quite distinct senses: in the narrow sense, as meaning simply the intellectual; in the broad sense, as indicating the demands of the entire man. The true mysticism stands for the broadly rational.

So, too, we speak of the necessary fundamental assumption of the honesty or sincerity of the world; but this includes two quite distinct propositions: one, that the world must be thinkable, conceivable, construable, a logically consistent whole, a sphere for rational thinking,—where the test is consistency; the other, that the world must be worth while,

must not mock our highest ideals and aspirations, must in some true and genuine sense satisfy the whole man, be a sphere for rational living,—where the test is worth. All our arguments go forward upon these two assumptions. Now, a true mysticism contends that the second principle is as rational as the first, though it must be freely granted that it is not as easy to employ it for detailed conclusions, and it is consequently much more liable to abuse. The true mysticism wishes to be not less, but more, rational. It knows no shorthand substitute for the hard and steady thinking of the philosopher, or for the historical experience of the prophet; it needs and uses both.

In all this, it is plain that the truly mystical is a legitimate outgrowth of the emphasis of the social consciousness upon recognition of the entire personality. Phillips Brooks finds just this in the intellectual life of Jesus. "The great fact concerning it is this," he says, "that in him the intellect never works alone. You never can separate its workings from the complete operation of the entire nature. He never simply knows, but always loves and resolves at the same time."[1]

[1] Brooks, *The Influence of Jesus*, p. 219.

3. *The Self-Controlled Recognition of Emotion.*—Moreover, it probably may be fairly claimed that all of the mystical recognition of the emotional which is valuable or even legitimate, is preserved, and far more safely and sanely conceived, in a strictly personal conception of religion. It may well be doubted, if it is possible in any other way, both to do justice to feeling in religion, and at the same time to keep feeling in its proper place. Is it possible briefly to indicate both the recognition of emotion and the control of emotion in religion?

The true mysticism recognizes that the supreme joy is "joy in personal life"—joy in entering into the revelation of a person; and it believes with reason that a growing acquaintance with God must have such heights and depths of meaning as no other personal relation can have. It is not, therefore, afraid or distrustful of true emotion—of joy or peace, of intense longing or of keen satisfaction—in the religious life.

But the true mysticism knows at the same time that deep revelation of a person is made only to the reverent, that the conditions are in the highest degree ethical, and above all must be recognized to be so in religion. It

does view, then, with deep distrust an emotional emphasis in religion that ignores the ethical. It cannot forget that Christ thought that everything must be tested by its fruits in life. Paul, too, insisted on applying the test of an active ministering love to the highly valued emotional experiences of the Corinthians; and writes to the Galatians that there is but one infallible proof of the working of the Spirit in them — a righteous life: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

And a true mysticism knows that the spirit, reverent of personality, leads to a self-restraint that does not seek the emotional experience simply as such on *any* conditions; but, knowing the supreme psychological conditions of happiness and character and influence, it loses itself in an unselfish love and in absorbing work, and understands that it must simply let the experiences come. It will have nothing, therefore, to do with strained emotion, or with the working up of feeling for its own sake. It seeks health, not merely the signs of health. It prizes, therefore, the joy that simply proclaims itself as the sign of the normal life and so positively strengthens and

cheers, but it will have nothing of the strain of emotion which is drain.

It is interesting to notice that it is exactly this true psychological attitude concerning the emotional life that Phillips Brooks believed that he found perfectly reflected in Jesus. "The sensitiveness of Jesus to pain and joy," he says, "never leads him for a moment to try to be sad or happy with direct endeavor; nor, is there any sign that he ever judges the real character of himself or any other man by the sadness or the happiness that for the moment covers his life. He simply lives, and joy and sorrow issue from his living, and cast their brightness and their gloominess back upon his life; but there is no sorrow and no joy that he ever sought for itself, and he always kept a self-knowledge underneath the joy or sorrow, undisturbed by the moment's happiness or unhappiness."[1]

How far from this objectivity and this healthful emotional life is the atmosphere of most of our devotional books, and, one might say, of all the manuals of ordinary mysticism! That this difficulty should confront us in devotional literature is very natural; for such writing commonly aims to give the emotional

[1] *The Influence of Jesus*, p. 156.

sense of reality in religion; and is, therefore, particularly under the temptation to show and to produce a straining after the emotion, as for its own sake. Moreover, the very introspection, almost inevitably involved in the reading and writing of devotional books, tends to bring about an artificial change in the religious experience, and so to introduce into it the abnormal.

But the social consciousness, so far as it affects religion, not only tends to draw away from the falsely mystical, and to emphasize the personal, and so to keep the truly mystical, but it is even more plain that it must tend to insist upon the ethical in religion.

## CHAPTER VII

### *THE THOROUGH ETHICIZING OF RELIGION*

### I. THE PRESSURE OF THE PROBLEM

THE social consciousness looks to the thorough ethicizing of religion. If the social consciousness is to be regarded as historically justified, it must believe that this growing sense of brotherhood and consequent obligation is simply our response to the on-working of God's own plan, God's own will expressing itself in us. The purpose to recognize the will of God, thus necessarily involves the recognition of human relations, since, as soon as conscience is strongly stirred in any direction, religion can but feel, in this demand of conscience, the demand of God, and, therefore, must bring the convictions of the social consciousness into religion. Indeed, it may be well believed that Kaftan is right in his insistence that it is exactly through the practical, that is, in the realm of the ethical, that knowledge arises from faith.[1]

[1] Cf. *American Journal of Theology*, Oct., 1898, p. 824.

In any case, it is evident that the old problem of faith and works, of religion and ethics, of the first and second commandments, meets us here in a way not to be put aside. With an ethical demand so insistent as that of the social consciousness no religion can be at peace that is not with equal insistence ethical. We are bound, then, to show how communion with God, the supreme desire to find God, necessarily carries with it active love for men. We must show how we truly commune with God in such active service. The social consciousness, thus, positively thrusts upon every religious man, who believes in it, the problem of the thorough ethicizing of religion. Or, to put the matter in a slightly different way, if the sense of the value and the sacredness of the person is one of the two greatest moral convictions of our time, then religion must be clearly seen to hold this conviction, or lose its connection with what is most real and vital to us. This is the problem.

## II. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

All will probably agree that religion is communion with God. We have seen why the social consciousness cannot accept a falsely

mystical view of that communion. For similar reasons, it must make absolutely subordinate all non-ethical and simply mysterious means which make no appeal to the conscience and to the reason—the falsely sacramental. Only the person is truly sacramental. Much else may be of value, but the touch of personal life is the only absolute essential in religion. We have seen, also, why the social consciousness tends to regard religion as a strictly personal relation.

Our problem thus becomes: How does the desire for personal relation with God, the desire for God himself, lead directly into the ethical life—into the full and practical recognition of the ethical demands of the social consciousness?

To guard against any possible misconception, it is, perhaps, well to say at the start that the desire for a personal relation with God has no purpose of returning by another route to the false position of mysticism, in the claim of special private revelations that are exclusively for it. It expects, rather, personal conviction of that great revelation that is common to all, and, moreover, it knows well that no personal relation is essentially sensuous, and it certainly looks for no sensuous relation to God.

It may be worth while, too, to reverse our question for a moment, and ask how morality necessarily involves religion. The true moral life is the fulfilment of all personal relations, and as such can least of all omit the greatest and most fundamental relation which gives being and meaning and value to all the rest—the relation to God. The fully moral life, therefore, must include religion. The unity of the two may be thus seen.

But the present inquiry looks at the matter from the other side, and seeks a careful and thoroughgoing answer to the question: Why is the Christian religion, as a personal relation to God, necessarily ethical?

### III. THE ANSWER

1. *Involved in Relation to Christ.*—In the first place, then, it probably may be safely claimed that there is no test of the moral life of a man so certain as his attitude toward Christ. Setting aside, now, any special religious claims of Christ altogether, and recognizing him only as earth's highest character, the supreme artist in living, who knows the secret of the moral life more surely and more perfectly than any other, he becomes

even so the surest touch-stone of character; and the iron filings will not be more certainly attracted to the magnet than will the men of highest character be attracted to Christ when he is really seen as he is. There is no test of character so certain as the test of one's personal relation to the best persons. The personal attitude toward Christ is the supreme test. In receiving him, in becoming his disciples in a completer sense than we own ourselves the disciples of any other, we make the supreme moral choice of our lives; and, if no more is true than has been already said, we so accept as a matter of fact the fullest historical revelation of God at the same time. The ethical and religious here fall absolutely together. And all the subsequent choices of our Christian life, if true to Christ, are necessarily moral.

2. *The Divine Will Felt in the Ethical Command.*—In the second place, the sense of the presence of God, of the divine will laid upon us, if we have the religious feeling at all, comes to us nowhere in our common life so certainly and so persistently as in a sense of obligation which we cannot shake off, a sense of facing a clear duty. To run away from this, we are made to feel,

is plainly to run away from God. Is this not a simply true interpretation of the common consciousness? Here, then, the religious experience is in the very sphere of the ethical, and identical with it.

3. *Involved in the Nature of God's Gifts.*— Again, God's gifts in religion are of such a kind that they simply cannot be given to the unwilling soul; just to receive them, therefore, implies willingness to use them; and faith becomes inevitably both "a gift and an activity." However one names God's gifts in religion, so long as the relation is kept a spiritual one at all, receiving the gift requires a real ethical attitude in the recipient. A real forgiveness, for example, involves personal reconciliation, restored personal relations; and reconciliation is mutual. One cannot, then, be said in any true sense to accept forgiveness from God who is not himself in an attitude of reconciliation with God, of harmony of will with him. In the same way, peace with God, the gift of the Spirit, life, God's own life, cannot be really given to any man without an ethical response on his part in a definite attitude of will. Anything arbitrary here is, therefore, necessarily shut out. God's gifts in religion are

of such a kind that they simply cannot be given to the unwilling soul. They are not things to be mechanically poured out on men. We have no need, consequently, to guard our religious statements in this respect. We cannot even receive from God the spiritual gifts of the religious relation without the active will. Here, too, religion is certainly ethical.

4. *Communion with God, through Harmony with His Ethical Will.*—Or, one may say, desire for real communion with God seeks God himself, not things, or some experience merely. But the very center of personality is the will; any genuine seeking of God himself, therefore, to commune with him, requires unity with his ethical will. The deepest religious motive is at the same time, thus, an impulse to character.

5. *The Vision of God for the Pure in Heart.*—Christ's own statement—"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"—suggests another aspect of this essential unity of the religious and the ethical. The connection in the beatitude is no chance one. The highest and completest revelation of personality, human or divine, can be made only to the reverent. God reveals himself

to the reverent soul, and most of all to the pure—to those souls that are reverent of personality throughout and under the severest pressure. Therefore, the pure in heart shall see God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him."[1] The vision of God requires the spirit that is reverent of personality, and this spirit is the abiding source of the finest ethical living.

6. *Sharing the Life of God.*—But perhaps the clearest and most satisfactory putting of the relation is this. The very meaning of religion is sharing the life of God. As soon, now, as God is conceived as essentially holy and loving, a God of character, a living will and not a substance—and Christianity to be true to itself, must always so conceive him—so soon religion and morality are indissolubly united. God's life, according to Christ's teaching, is the life of constant and perfect self-giving. To share the life of God, therefore, to share his single purpose, is to come into the life of loving service. The two fall together from the point of view of the social consciousness. And we are "saved," we come into the real religious life, only in the proportion in which we have really learned to

[1] Psalm 25:14.

love. "Everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God."[1] The old separation of religion and character is impossible from this point of view.

7. *Christ, as Satisfying Our Highest Claims on Life.*—But we may still profitably press the question: Is the Christian religion—the special faith in the revelation of God in Christ, the best way to righteousness? does it necessarily, most naturally, most spontaneously, and most joyfully carry righteousness of life with it? If this is to be true, Christian faith, in Herrmann's language, "must give men the power to submit with joy to the claims of duty."[2] It may be doubted whether any one has dealt with this question as satisfactorily as Herrmann himself, and a few sentences may well be quoted from his discussion. "We know that the ordinary instinctive way in which men seek the satisfaction of all the needs of life makes it impossible to submit honestly to the demands of duty, and we see, also, the falsity of the childish idea of the mystics that this instinct should be extirpated; it follows, then, that we can only seek moral deliverance in a true and perfect satisfaction

[1] I John 4:7.

[2] *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 230.

of our craving for life. . . Now just such a feeling of perfect inner contentment is possible to the Christian, and he has it just in proportion as he understands that God turns to him in Christ. . . This is redemption, that Christ creates within us a living joy, whose brightness beams even from the eye of sorrow, and tells the world of a power it cannot comprehend. And the power that works redemption is the fact that in our world there is a Man whose appearance can at any moment be to us the mighty Word of God, snatching us out of our troubles and making us to feel that he desires to have us for his own, and so setting us free from the world and from our own instinctive nature."[1]

Christ, that is, has no desire to withdraw himself from the test of the largest life. He is able to satisfy the highest demands for life. He courts the trial. He claims to offer life, the largest life. "I came," he says, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."[2] His way of deliverance is not negative but positive, not limiting but fulfilling. He is able to give such largeness of life in himself, such inner satisfaction of the craving

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 232–234.
[2] John 10:10.

for life, as makes a lower life lose its power over us, the larger and higher life driving out the meaner and lower. This is positive victory, supplanting the lower with the higher; just as in literature, in music, in friendship, and in love, we expect the best to break down the taste for the lower.

8. *The Vision of the Riches of the Life of Christ, Ethically Conditioned.*—But the thought of Christ's satisfying our highest claim on life deserves to be carried further, if it is to be saved from vagueness and to have its full power with us. The highest value in the world is a personal life. So Christ has made us feel. It is finally the only value, for all other so-called values borrow their value from persons. The highest joy conceivable is entering into the riches of another's personal life through his willing self-revelation. Now it is no fine fancy that the supremely rich life of the world's history is Christ's. God can only be known, if we are not to fall back into the vagaries of mysticism, in his concrete manifestation; and God opens out in Christ, the New Testament believes, the inexhaustible wealth of his own personal life. It is God's highest gift, the gift of himself. "No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither

doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal him."[1] "This is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send."[2] So it seemed to Paul: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."[3] Do we not here catch a glimpse of what the depth of that satisfaction with the inner life of God in Christ may be?

> " For He who hath the heart of God sufficed,
> Can satisfy all hearts,—yea, thine and mine."

Only the riches of a personal life can satisfy our claim on life, our desire for life; and, ultimately, we can be fully satisfied only with God's own life in the fullest revelation he can make of it to us men. Only this can be "the unspeakable gift." The thirst for God, for the living God, is a simply true expression of the human heart when it comes to real self-knowledge.

But the riches of the personal life of Christ are necessarily hidden to one who does not come into the sharing of Christ's purpose. The condition of the vision is ethical. The

[1] Matt. 11:27. [2] John 17:3. [3] Eph. 3:8.

very satisfaction, therefore, of our craving for life constantly impels to a more perfect union with the will of Christ; for such complete entering into the life of another with joy implies profound agreement. The desire for life, therefore, for God's own life, for communion with God, itself impels to character. Faith does here give "the power to submit with joy to the claims of duty," and religion is ethical in the very heart of it.

9. *The Moral Law, as a Revelation of the Love of God.*—The same unity of the religious and ethical life is helpfully seen, if we put the matter in one further and slightly different way. Only the Christian religion, faith in God as Father revealed in Christ, enables us to welcome the stern demands of duty and so gives us inner deliverance, joy, and liberty in the moral life; for now the moral demand is seen, not as task only, but as opportunity. For Christ, the law of God is a revelation of the love of God; it is a gracious indication — a secret whispered to us — of the lines along which we are to find our largest and richest life; it is not a limitation of life, but a way to larger life. Not, then, the avoidance, as far as possible, of the law of God, but the completest fulfilment of it is the road

to life—following the hint of the law into the remotest ramifications, and into the inmost spirit, of the life.

The other attitude which assumes that the law is a hindrance to life is a distinct denial of the love of God. It implies that God lays upon us demands which are not for our good. It refuses to accept as reality Christ's manifestation of God as Father. Real belief in the love of God, on the other hand, must take the fearful out of his commands. To be "freed from the law," now, has quite a different meaning: not the taking off from us of the moral demand, but the inner deliverance, that would not have the command removed, but finds life *in* it, and obeys it freely and joyfully. Only a thoroughgoing and fundamental faith in the Fatherhood of God can bring such inner deliverance, even as we have seen that only such a faith can really ground the social consciousness. And such a faith only Christ has proved adequate to bring.

With this light, now, we feel, in every demand of duty, the presence of God, and in this presence of God the pledge of life, not a limitation of life. The religious life desires God, and it finds God never so certainly

as in the purpose fully to face duty. Every one of the relations of life is, thus, turned to with joy by the religious man, as sure to be a further channel of the revelation of God. The thirst for God drives to the faithful fulfilment of the human relation. Religion becomes joyfully ethical.

Nor is there any possibility of abandonment to the will of God *in general*, as the mystic seems often to feel. God's will means particulars all along the way of our life; and there is no communion with God except in this ethical will in particulars. At no point, therefore, can the religious life withdraw itself from the daily duty and maintain its own existence. The constant inevitable condition of the religious communion is the ethical will. Our providential place is God's place to find us. Where God has put us, just there he will best find us. This is further seen in the fact that the true Christian experience is a constant paradox: God ever satisfying, and yet ever impelling — never allowing us to remain where we are, but holding up to us the always higher ideal beyond; the law is ever, "Of his fulness we all received, and grace in place of grace."[1] The deepen-

[1] John 1:16. Cf. Herrmann, *Op. cit.*, pp. 92, 93.

ing communion with God is only through a constantly deepening moral life.

Such a thoroughgoing ethicizing of religion as the social consciousness demands, we need not hesitate, therefore, to believe is possible. The truer religion is to its own great aspiration after God, the more certainly is it ethical.

But the social consciousness, so far as it influences religion, not only tends to draw away from the falsely mystical, and to emphasize the personal and the ethical, it also tends to emphasize in religion the concretely, historically Christian.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE EMPHASIS OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS UPON THE HISTORICALLY CHRISTIAN IN RELIGION*

THE fact that the social consciousness tends to emphasize in religion the concretely historically Christian, has been so inevitably involved in the preceding discussions, that it can be treated very briefly.

### I. THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS NEEDS HISTORICAL JUSTIFICATION

The justification of the social consciousness, we have seen,[1] must be preëminently from history. Neither nature nor speculation can satisfy it. It needs to be able to believe in a living God who is in living relation to living men. It needs just such a justification as historical Christianity, and only historical Christianity, can give; it needs the assurance of an objective divine will in the world, definitely working in the line of its own ideals. It needs also to be able to give such

[1] Cf above, pp. 59 ff.

definite content to the thought of God as shall be able to satisfy its own strong insistence upon the rational and the ethical as historical.

## II. CHRISTIANITY'S RESPONSE TO THIS NEED

If religion is to be a reality to the social consciousness, then, there must be a real revelation of a real God in the real world, in actual human history, not an imaginary God, nor a dream God, nor a God of mystic contemplation. This discernment of God in the real world, in actual history, is the glory even of the Old Testament; and it came, as we have seen, along the line of the social consciousness. And it is such a real revelation of the real God that Christianity finds preëminently in Christ. It can say to the social consciousness: Make no effort to believe, but simply put yourself in the presence of a concrete, definite, actual, historical fact, with its perennial ethical appeal; put yourself in the presence of Christ—the greatest and realest of the facts of history,—and let that fact make its own legitimate impression, work its own natural work; that fact alone, of all the facts of history, gives you full and ample warrant for your own being.

If this be true, it can hardly be doubted that, so far as the social consciousness understands itself and influences religion at all, it will tend to emphasize, not to underestimate, the concretely, historically Christian.

The natural influence of the social consciousness upon religion, then, may be said to be fourfold: it tends to draw away from the falsely mystical; it tends to emphasize the personal in religion, and so to keep the truly mystical; it tends to emphasize the ethical in religion; and it needs the concretely, historically Christian.

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS UPON THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE

## CHAPTER IX

### *GENERAL RESULTS*

THE question of this third division of our inquiry is this: To what changed points of view, and to what restatements of doctrine, and so to what better appreciation of Christian truth, does the social consciousness of our time lead? The question is raised here, as in the case of the conception of religion, not as one of exact historical connection, but rather as a question of sympathetic points of contact. It means simply: With what changes in theological statements would the social consciousness naturally find itself most sympathetic?

Certain general results are clear from the start, and might be anticipated from any one of several points of view.

## I. THE CONCEPTION OF THEOLOGY IN PERSONAL TERMS

In the first place, the social consciousness means, we have found, emphasis on the fully personal—a fresh awakening to the significance of the person and of personal relations. Its whole activity is in the sphere of personal relations. Hence, as in the conception of religion, so here, so far as the social consciousness affects theology at all, it will tend everywhere to bring the personal into prominence, and it certainly will be found in harmony ultimately with the attempt to conceive theology in terms of personal relations. These are for the social consciousness the realest of realities; and if theology is to be real to the social consciousness, then it must make much of the personal. Theology, thus, it is worth while seeing, is not to be personal *and* social, but it will be social—it will do justice to the social consciousness—if it does justice to the fully personal; for, in the language of another, "man is social, just in so far as he is personal."[1]

The foreign and unreal seeming of many of the old forms of statement, it may well be

[1] Nash, *Ethics and Revelation*, p. 259.

noted in passing, has its probable cause just here. They were not shaped in the atmosphere of the social consciousness. They got at things in a way we should not now think of using. The method of approach was too merely metaphysical and individualistic and mystical, and the result seems to us to have but slight ethical or religious significance. The arguments that now move us most, in this entire realm of spiritual inquiry, are moral and social rather than metaphysical and mystical. It is interesting to see, for example, how such arguments for immortality as that of the simplicity of the soul's being—and most of those used by Plato—and how such arguments even for the existence of God as those of Samuel Clarke from time and space, have become for us merely matters of curious inquiry. We can hardly imagine men having given them real weight. A similar change seems to be creeping over the laborious attempts metaphysically to conceive the divinity of Christ. The question is shifting its position for both radical and conservative to a new ground—from the metaphysical and mystical to the moral and social; though some radicals who regard themselves as in the van of progress have not yet found it out, and

so find fault with one for not continually defining himself in terms of the older metaphysical formulas and shibboleths. The considerations, in all these questions and in many others, which really weigh most with us now, are considerations which belong to the sphere of the personal spiritual life. Ultimately, no doubt, a metaphysics is involved here too; but it is a metaphysics whose final reality is spirit, not an unknown substance—Locke's "something, I know not what."

The unsatisfactoriness of even so honored a symbol as the Apostles' Creed, as a permanently adequate statement of Christian faith, must for similar reasons become increasingly clear in the atmosphere of the social consciousness. One wonders, as he goes carefully over it, that so many concrete statements could be made concerning the Christian religion, which yet are so little ethical. The creed seems almost to exclude the ethical. It has nothing to say, except by rather distant implication, of the character of God, of the character of Christ, or of the character of men. The life of Christ between his birth and his death are untouched. The considerations that really weigh most with us—as they did with the apostles—in making us Christians,

certainly do not come here to prominent expression. This whole difference of atmosphere is the striking fact; and were it not that we instinctively interpret its phrases in accordance with our modern consciousness, we should feel the difference much more than we do.

What the previous discussion has called the truly mystical—the recognition of the whole man, of the entire personality—is coming in increasingly to correct both the falsely mystical and the falsely metaphysical. We are arguing now, in harmony with the social consciousness, from the standpoint of the broadly rational, not from that of the narrowly intellectual.

## II. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD, AS THE DETERMINING PRINCIPLE IN THEOLOGY

One might reach essentially the same general results from the influence of the social consciousness, by seeing that, so far as it deepens for us the meaning of the personal, it will deepen immediately our conception of the Fatherhood of God—the central and dominating doctrine in all theology—and so affect all theology. For, with a change in the con-

ception of God, no doctrine can go wholly untouched. Every step into a deeper feeling for the personal—and the growth of the modern social consciousness is undoubtedly a long step in that direction—deepens necessarily religion and theology. Perhaps the possible results here can be illustrated in no way better than by recalling Patterson DuBois' putting of the needed change in the conception of the proper attitude of a father toward his child. We are not to say, he writes: "I will conquer that child, no matter what it may cost him," but we are to say, "I will help that child to conquer himself, no matter what it may cost me." Now that change in point of view is a well-nigh perfect illustration of the social consciousness in a given relation, and it cannot be doubted that it is a true expression of Christ's thought of the Fatherhood of God; but has it really dominated through and through our theological statements? Manifestly, what it means to us that God is Father depends on what we have come to see in fatherhood. And Principal Fairbairn, in the second part of his *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, has given us a good illustration of how much it means for theology to be in earnest in making the

Fatherhood of God the determining doctrine in theology.

### III. CHRIST'S OWN SOCIAL EMPHASES

Again, if the general influence of the social consciousness upon theological doctrine is to be recognized at all, it is evident that a Christian theology must take full account of Christ's own social emphases. By loyalty to these, it will expect best to meet the need of an enlightened social consciousness. It will strive thus—to use Professor Peabody's instructive summary of "the social principles of the teaching of Jesus"—to be true to "the view from above, the approach from within, and the movement toward a spiritual end; wisdom, personality, idealism; a social horizon, a social power, a social aim. The supreme truth that this is God's world gave to Jesus his spirit of social optimism; the assurance that man is God's instrument gave to him his method of social opportunism; the faith that in God's world God's people are to establish God's kingdom gave him his social idealism. He looks upon the struggling, chaotic, sinning world with the eye of an unclouded religious faith, and discerns in

it the principle of personality fulfilling the will of God in social service."[1]

And every one of these three great social principles of Jesus has obvious theological applications, not yet fully made.

The social consciousness, indeed, well illustrates Fairbairn's admirable statement of how progress is to be expected in theology. "The longer the history [of Christ]," he says, "lives in the [Christian] consciousness and penetrates it, the more does the consciousness become able to interpret the history in its own terms and according to its own contents. The old pagan mind into which Christianity first came could not possibly be the best interpreter of Christianity, and the more the mind is cleansed of the pagan the more qualified it becomes to interpret the religion. It is, therefore, reasonable to expect that the later forms of faith should be the truer and purer."[2]

Now the social consciousness itself is a genuine manifestation of the spirit of Christ at work in the world, and the mind permeated with this social consciousness is consequently better able to turn back to the teaching of Jesus and give it proper interpretation.

[1] Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 104.
[2] Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 186.

## IV. THE REFLECTION IN THEOLOGY OF THE CHANGES IN THE CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

Once more, theology, as an expression of religion, will at once reflect any change in the conception of religion. The influence of the social consciousness upon religion, already traced, will, therefore, inevitably pass over into theology. This means nothing less than a changed point of view, in the consideration of each doctrine. For theology must then recognize clearly that it can build on no falsely mystical conception of communion with God; but, while keeping the elements in mysticism which are justified by the social consciousness, it will require of itself throughout a formulation of doctrine in terms that shall be thoroughly personal, thoroughly ethical, and indubitably loyal to the concretely historically Christian. Many traditional statements quite fail to meet so searching a test; but no lower standard can give a theology that should fully meet the demands of the social consciousness.

The general results of the influence of the social consciousness upon theological doctrine, then, may be said to include: The emphasis upon the fully personal, and so

conceiving theology in terms of personal relation; the deepening of the conception of the Fatherhood of God, and making this the determining principle in theology; the application of the social principles of the teaching of Jesus to theology; the reflection in theology of the natural changes in the conception of religion wrought by the social consciousness. Now any one of these general results indicates the certain influence of the social consciousness upon theology, and any one might be followed out into helpful suggestions for the restatement of theological doctrines.

But we shall probably most clearly and definitely answer the question of our theme, if we ask specifically concerning the several elements of the social consciousness: How does a deepening sense of the like-mindedness of men, of the mutual influence of men, of the value and sacredness of the person, of personal obligation, and of love, tend to affect our theological point of view and mode of statement? And our inquiry will follow these separate questions in separate chapters, except that for the purposes of theological inference, the last three may be appropriately grouped together.

## CHAPTER X

### *THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEEPENING SENSE OF THE LIKE-MINDEDNESS OF MEN UPON THEOLOGY*

In definitely considering the influence of the social consciousness upon theological doctrines, our first question becomes: How does the deepening sense of the like-mindedness of men affect theology?

Obviously, here, the change will be largely one of mood. We shall look at our themes with a different feeling, and so speak differently, modifying our methods of putting things in those slight ways that do not seem specially significant to one who judges in the mass, but mean very much to one who feels the finer implications of personal life. These finer changes no one can hope to follow out in detail. Certain of these finer changes will naturally find incidental expression in the course of the more formal treatment.

But our attention must be mainly given to the statement of some of the most important of the plainer results of the principle in theology.

### I. NO PRIME FAVORITES WITH GOD

In the first place, this conviction of the like-mindedness of men means that there can be no prime favorites with God.

It can hardly help affecting the thought of election. Election will, indeed, be thought of as qualified by the character of the chosen; for even Paul's argument in Romans clearly recognizes this, and is, in fact, itself a distinct argument against a narrow doctrine of election, as others have recognized.[1] But, beyond this, the conviction of the like-mindedness of men will especially view election as a choice for service. The divine method of election must be in harmony with Christ's fundamental principle of his kingdom, and with the developing social consciousness: "Whosoever shall be first among you, shall be servant of all."[2] It is no accident that this thought of election as choice for preëminent service, which is indeed soundly biblical, has come into special prominence in these days of the social consciousness. The same change is passing over our view of the "elect," as of the "privileged" and "governing" classes. We

[1] Cf. e. g., Clarke, *Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 145.
[2] Mark 10:44.

shall not return to the older feeling of prime favorites of God, and the problem of evil will find herein a certain alleviation. We shall feel increasingly that each race and each individual have their calling and have their compensating advantages; and that, when it comes down to the final test of opportunity, the differences in opportunity between individuals are far less than they seem; for to each one is given the possibility of the largest service any man can render — the possibility of touching closely with the very spirit of his life a few other lives. "There are compensations," as James says, "and no outward changes of condition in life can keep the nightingale of its eternal meaning from singing in all sorts of different men's hearts."[1]

## II. THE GREAT UNIVERSAL QUALITIES AND INTERESTS, THE MOST VALUABLE

Moreover, since equality of need among men,[2] implies, as we have seen, a common capacity — even if in varying degrees — of entering into the most fundamental interests of life, this belief in the essential likeness of

[1] James, *Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals*, p. 301.
[2] Cf. Giddings, *Elements of Sociology*, p. 324.

men is likely to carry with it that most wholesome conviction for theology, that the great universal qualities and interests are the most valuable. Not that which distinguishes us from one another, but that which we have in common is most valuable. As Howells tells the boys in his *A Boy's Town*, "the first thing you have to learn here below, is that in essentials you are just like every one else, and that you are different from others only in what is not so much worth while."[1] This consideration is no small help in facing that most difficult problem for any ideal view of the world — the problem of evil.

In God's world, we feel that the most common things ought to be the best. And this growing conviction of the social consciousness comes in to confirm our faith. The constant and simple insistence of Christ on receptivity as a fundamental quality in his kingdom is built, in fact, on an optimistic faith in the value of the common things.

It is interesting to notice the varied confirmations of the value of the common. How often we have to feel that the deepest discussions come out with only deeper in-

[1] Howells, *A Boy's Town*, p. 205.

sight into the great common truths; and, on the other hand, that in stilted philosophizing, what seems at first sight a great discovery, proves only a perversely obscure way of putting a common truth.

It is the very mission of genius—of the poet in the larger sense, we are coming to feel, to bring out the value of the common. His distinctive mark is that he has kept a fresh sense for the great common experiences of life. So Kipling prays:

> "It is enough that through Thy grace
> I saw naught common on Thy earth.
> Take not that vision from my ken."

So, the greatest in art, Hegel contends, has a universal appeal.

It is a wholesome and heartening conviction, I say, to bring into theology, that the really best things are common, accessible to all, actually shared in, to an extent beyond that which our superficial vision seems to show. For, after all, this conviction of the social consciousness is only bringing home to us, in a new and appreciable way, Christ's own optimism and his own faith in the love of the Father. It is only another illustration of Fairbairn's principle of the Christian consciousness becoming more Christian, and

so better able to understand and interpret Christ.

And it leads us back by this route of the social consciousness, to emphasize in life, and in our theological thinking upon the conditions of entering the kingdom of God, Christ's own insistence upon the two universally human characteristics found in every child—susceptibility and trust, which, voluntarily cherished, become teachableness and belief in love. If God is Father indeed, and we are intended to come to our best in association with him, these qualities must be the most fundamental ones. And they imply no lack of virility, either, for the highest self-assertion, as Professor Everett pointed out in his criticism of Nietzsche, is in complete self-surrender to such a will as God's. "When Jesus said, 'He that loseth his life shall save it,' he said in effect—The self-surrender to which I call you is the truest self-assertion. We find thus in the teachings of Christianity a summons to strength far greater than that implied by the self-assertion which is most characteristic of the teachings of Nietzsche, because it is the assertion of a larger self."[1]

[1] *The New World*, Dec., 1898, pp. 702, 703.

Our outlook becomes well-nigh hopeless, when we make our tests of admission to the kingdom so much more exclusive than Christ himself made them.

### III. ESSENTIAL LIKENESS UNDER VERY DIVERSE FORMS

It is particularly important for theology that this conviction of the like-mindedness of men has come from a growing power to discern essential likeness under very diverse forms; for this consideration bears not only on the problem of natural evil, but also on the problem of sin and of the progress of Christianity.

We have taken some curiously diverse paths to this understanding of diverse lives. Travels, history, biography, autobiographical fragments, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and—to no small degree—fiction, with its stories of out-of-the-way places and out-of-the-way peoples and of unfamiliar classes,—all have been thoroughfares for the social consciousness here.

We are slowly learning to see the likeness under the differences, and so to transcend the differences even between occidental and

oriental. All this means much, not only for our practical missionary putting of the truth, but also for our final theological statements. They will inevitably grow simpler, larger, more universally human, and at the same time more deep and solid.

We are slowly learning, too, to discern a deep inner content of life under conditions that have no appeal for us, and to see like ideals and aspirations under very diverse forms of expression. Take, for example, these three or four sentences—a small part of that quoted by Professor James in his essay, *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings*,—from Stevenson's *Lantern-Bearers:* "It is said that a poet has died young in the breast of the most stolid. It may be contended rather that a (somewhat minor) bard in almost every case survives, and is the spice of life to his possessor. Justice is not done to the versatility and the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination. His life from without may seem but a rude mound of mud; there will be some golden chamber at the heart of it in which he dwells delighted."[1] And, later, on the side of ideals, Stevenson is quoted once again: "If I could show you

[1]James, *Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals*, p. 237.

these men and women all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging to some rag of honor, the poor jewel of their souls!"[1] And now, having quoted Howells and Stevenson as theological authorities, I shall be pardoned if, for a moment, I erect Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age* into a "theological institute": "See," said my friend, bearing somewhat on my shoulder, "how this strange thing, this love of ours, lives and shines out in the unlikeliest of places! You have been in the fields in early morning? Barren acres, all! But only stoop—catch the light thwartwise—and all is a silver network of gossamer! So the fairy filaments of this strange thing underrun and link together the whole world. Yet it is not the old imperious god of the fatal bow—*ἐρως ἀνικατε μάχαν*—not that—nor even the placid respectable *στοργή*—but something still unnamed, perhaps more mysterious, more divine! Only one must stoop to see it, old fellow, one must stoop!"[2]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 282.
[2] P. 112.

It means very much for the sanity of our outlook on life, and for any possible theodicy, that we can believe the heart of such a view as this for which Stevenson and Grahame are here contending. And what is all this attempt to get away from this "certain blindness in human beings," of which Professor James speaks, but a growing into one of the fixed habits of Jesus, what Phillips Brooks calls "his discovery of interest in people whom the world generally would have found most uninteresting?" "And this same habit," he adds, "passing over into his disciples, made the wide and democratic character of the new faith."[1]

## IV. AS APPLIED TO THE QUESTION OF IMMORTALITY

It may probably be safely said that this steadily growing conviction of the social consciousness, of the essential likeness of all men, which is daily confirmed afresh, and the more confirmed the more careful the study, is not likely to take kindly to the idea—which comes into a part of Dr. McConnell's argument concerning immortality, in his interesting book, *The Evolution of Immortality*—

[1] Brooks, *The Influence of Jesus*, p. 253.

that living creatures classed as men on physical grounds are not, therefore, to be so classed on psychical grounds.[1] The considerations and illustrations brought forward by Dr. McConnell, in connection with this proposition, I cannot think would seem at all conclusive to either the trained psychologist or sociologist. It is exactly the like-mindedness of men which the social consciousness affirms, and it has not come hastily to its conclusion. It will not quickly surrender that conclusion. There *is* an "evolution of immortality," and it has been agelong, but it is pre-human. The belief in immortality so far as it does not rest purely on the question of the moral quality of a given human life (where the hypothesis of "immortability" may properly enough come in) is grounded upon characteristics—like that of the possibility of absolutely indefinite progress[2]—which in sober scientific inquiry cannot safely be denied to any man, and must be denied to all creatures below man. In any case, the new theory of "immortability," so far as it is based upon the proposition

[1] McConnell, *The Evolution of Immortality*, pp. 75 ff.

[2] Cf. James, *Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 348 ff., p. 367; Lotze, *The Microcosmus*, Book V, especially Vol. I, pp. 713, 714.

here considered, has its battle to fight out with this established conviction of the social consciousness of the essential like-mindedness of all men.

There are various considerations, not all of them wholly creditable, which will lead many to turn a willing ear to this new prophesying; but, though it makes much of evolution, it seems to me to have the whole trend of the social evolution against it, and to give the lie to that patient sympathetic insight into the lives of other classes and peoples, which is one of the finest products of the ethical evolution of the race. If one is tempted to believe that a good large share of the human race are really brutes in human semblance,—and our selfishness and pride and impatience and unloving lack of insight and desire to dominate may naturally tempt in this direction,—let him read that chapter of Professor James to which reference has already been made, *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings*, and its pendant, *What Makes a Life Significant*. It may help his theology. Let him recall the words of Phillips Brooks concerning this "strange hopelessness about the world, joined to a strong hope for themselves, which we see in many good religious

people." "In their hearts they recognize indubitably that God is saving them, while the aspect of the world around them seems to show them that the world is going to perdition. This is a common enough condition of mind; but I think it may be surely said that it is not a good, nor can it be a permanent, condition. God has mercifully made us so that no man can constantly and purely believe in any great privilege for himself unless he believes in at least the possibility of the same privilege for other men."[1]

### V. CONSEQUENT LARGER SYMPATHY WITH MEN, FAITH IN MEN, AND HOPE FOR MEN

This whole conviction of the social consciousness, of the like-mindedness of men, leads naturally to increased *sympathy with men*, and this in turn to still better discernment of moral and spiritual realities. And this is of prime importance for the theologian; for sympathetic insight, it must never be forgotten, is the true route to spiritual verities. So far as our insight into actual human life becomes truer, so far our theology becomes clearer and more reasonable.

[1] *The Candle of the Lord, and Other Sermons*, p. 154.

This conviction leads also to increased *belief in men*, and consequently to increased belief in the effectiveness of the higher appeals. The temptation to disbelief in man was one of the underlying temptations of Christ as he looked forward to his work; but he turned resolutely from it, and refused to build his kingdom on any lower appeal that implied a lack of faith in men. Nothing seems to me more wonderful in Christ than his marvelous faith in man; for, though he has the deepest sense of the sin of men, there is not the slightest trace of cynicism in his thought or life.

This recognition of likeness under diversity, too, leads to increased *hope for men*, here and hereafter. In James' words: "It absolutely forbids us to be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own. . . . Neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer. . . . No one has insight into all the ideals. No one should presume to judge them off-hand."[1]

This thought helps us to greater hope for men, because, indeed, it helps us to the discernment of genuine ideals under very differ-

[1] *Talks on Psychology and Life's Ideals*, pp. 263, 265.

ent forms of life, of the universal sense of duty and some loyalty to it, though there is great diversity of judgment as to what is duty.[1] But, it is here to be noted, also, that the thought of the like-mindedness of men brings greater hope, because it helps to the discernment of likeness, even under difference in important terms used. We are coming to see that there is sometimes, at least, a really strong religious faith where men do not acknowledge the term. Thus, Bradley says: "All of us, I presume, more or less, are led beyond the region of ordinary facts. Some in one way, and some in others, we seem to touch and have communion with what is beyond the visible world. In various manners we find something higher, which supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us. And," as a philosopher he adds, "with certain persons, the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of thus experiencing the Deity."[2]

Even where the term Deity would be entirely abjured, we have seen with Paulsen,[3]

[1] Cf. above, p. 121 ff.

[2] Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 5, 6.

[3] Cf. above, pp. 46, 47.

that a real faith essentially religious in character may be clearly manifest. We are even coming to see that men may seem to themselves to be contending upon opposite sides of so fundamental a question as that of the personality of God, and yet be near together as to their own ultimate faith and attitude, and possibly even as to their real philosophical views of God; but the same term has come to have such different connotations for the men, from their different education and experience, that they simply cannot use it with the same meaning.

I have not the slightest desire to reduce the concrete, ethical, definitely personal religion of Jesus to the ambiguities of philosophical dreamers; the world is going to become more and more consciously and avowedly Christian. But I do not, on the other hand, as a Christian theologian, wish to shut my eyes to great essential likenesses in fundamental faiths and ideals and aspirations, because they are clothed in different garb. The life and teaching of Jesus have worked and are working in the consciousness of men far beyond the limits our feeble faith is inclined to prescribe. There is doubtless much "unconscious Christianity," much "unconscious

following of Christ."[1] And we are only following Christ's own counsel, when we refuse to forbid the man who is working a good work in his name, though he follows not with us.[2] Certainly, if we accept the witness of a man's life against the witness of his lips when the witness of his lips is right, we ought to accept the witness of his life against the witness of his lips when the witness of his lips is wrong.

With reference to all the preceding inferences from the deepening sense of the like-mindedness of men, it is particularly worthy of note, that this conviction of the essential likeness of men has come into existence side by side with the growing conviction of the moral unripeness of many men, and in spite of that conviction. The careful study of different social classes is forcing upon both the scientific sociologist and the practical social worker, the sense of the ethical immaturity of men. But deeper than this recognition of moral unripeness, deeper than the vision of the sad defectiveness of moral and spiritual ideals and standards,

[1] Cf. Fremantle, *The World as the Subject of Redemption*, pp. 250 ff, 320 ff; Lyman Abbott, *The Outlook*, Dec. 24, 1898.

[2] Mark 9:38, 39; Cf. Matt. 10:40-42.

deeper than the clear sense of the immense differences among men as to *what* is duty, deeper than the differences in even the most important terms used, lies this great conviction of likeness—that all men are moral and spiritual beings, made for relation to one another and to God; that they have ideals that have a wide outlook implicit in them, and have some loyalty to these ideals; that they do have a sense of obligation; that the moral and spiritual life is a reality, a great universal human fact.

## VI. JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO LIGHT, AND THE MORAL REALITY OF THE FUTURE LIFE

It is no accident, now, that accompanying this double social conviction, there has come into theology a new insistence upon the principle of judgment of a man according to his light, and consequently also, what Professor Clarke calls "a tendency toward the recognition of greater reality and freedom in the other life, and thus toward the possibility of moral change."[1] Our conception of the future life was certain to be modified by the social consciousness; and it may be

[1] *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 475.

doubted if any influence of the social consciousness upon theology can be more clearly traced historically than this. The motives that have been working in our minds here include, on the one hand, a wholesome sense of the imperfection of even the best human lives; a glad discernment, on the other hand, of the presence of genuine ideals in lives where we had thought there were none; the certainty that, as Dr. Clarke says, "for at least one-third of mankind the entire life of conscious and developed personality is lived in the other world;"[1] an experienced unwillingness to say, where we cannot see, the precise point at which the very diverse lives of men under very diverse conditions come to full moral maturity; and the conviction that a life that is to be moral at all must be moral everywhere and through all time, and that where even we can see a little, God can see much more. All these motives, now, make us refuse, with Christ, to answer the question, "Are there few that be saved?" And both with increasing hope, and with that increasing sense of the seriousness and significance of life which so characterizes the social consciousness, to urge: "Strive to enter in."

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 469.

The growing sense of the likeness of men does affect our thought of the future life. The best men, under the clearest light, have only begun; for the best, there is still much need of growth. Who has not begun at all? For whom is there no growth?

Let us make no mistake here. It is no light-hearted indifference to character, to which the genuine social consciousness leads. No age, indeed, ever saw so clearly as ours that the most essential conditions of happiness are in character, or was more certain that sin carries with it its own inevitable consequences. It is not a less, but a more, profound sense of the seriousness of the problem of moral character, that makes us hesitate to dogmatize concerning the future life.

To bring together, now, the conclusions of the chapter: The first element in the social consciousness—the deepening sense of the likeness of men—seems likely to affect theology, especially by modifying the thought of election through emphasis upon choice for service, and through the clear recognition that there are no prime favorites with God; by strengthening the conviction that the great common qualities and interests are the most valuable,

and that genuine and largely common ideals may be found under very diverse forms and conditions; and thus, on the one hand, by opposing the denial of the psychical likeness of men, as applied to the problem of immortality, and, on the other hand, by bringing us to larger sympathy with men, to larger faith in men, and to larger hope for men; and, finally, by laying new emphasis upon judgment according to light, and upon the moral reality and freedom of the future life.

## CHAPTER XI

### *THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEEPENING SENSE OF THE MUTUAL INFLUENCE OF MEN UPON THEOLOGY*

FROM this first element of the social consciousness, we turn now to the second, and ask, How does the deepening sense of the mutual influence of men affect theology?

### I. THE REAL UNITY OF THE RACE

1. First, then, taken with the sense of the likeness of men, it can hardly be doubted that sociology's strong feeling of the mutual influence of men deepens for theology the thought of the real, not the mechanical, unity of the race. The theologian believes, more than he did, in a race whose unity is preëminently moral, rather than physical or mystical. The truly scientific position for the theologian seems to be, to make no mysterious assumptions, where well-known causes are sufficient to account for the facts; and those causes which the social consciousness clearly sees to

be at work seem, in all probability, adequate to account for the facts in discussion so far as those facts are finite at all.[1] The theologian knows, then, a true moral universe, with a unity which is that of the close personal, mutual relations of like-minded spiritual beings.

The natural goal of such a race, the only one in which they can truly find themselves, is the kingdom of God. This conception of Christ is first thoroughly at home with us, when we see that the true unity of the race is that of personal moral relation. So far as men turn from that goal, this same racial unity of the inevitable and most intimate personal relations converts them into something approaching Ritschl's conception of an opposing "kingdom of sin."

Are we prepared to be thoroughly loyal to just this conception of the unity of the race throughout our theological thinking; and so to give up cherished ideas of "common," "transmitted," "inherited," or "racial" sin or righteousness, of "mystical solidarity," and racial ideal representation, etc.? It probably may be said with truth that few, if any, theological systems have been thus

[1] Cf. above, pp. 35 ff.

loyal. Indeed, under what seems a mistaken application of the social consciousness, and particularly under the misleading influence of the analogy of the organism, men have believed themselves attaining a deeper theological view, when they have, in fact, turned away from the sober teaching of the social consciousness.

It may not be in vain for our theology to hear and receive with patience a sociologist's definition of the "social mind." Upon this point Professor Giddings says explicitly: "There is no reason to suppose that society is a great being which is conscious of itself through some mysterious process of thinking, separate and distinct from the thinking that goes on in the brains of individual men. At any rate, there is no possible way yet known to man of proving that there is any such supreme social consciousness." Nevertheless, he adds: "To the group of facts that may be described as the simultaneous like-mental-activity of two or more individuals in communication with one another, or as a concert of the emotions, thought, and will of two or more communicating individuals, we give the name, the social mind. This name, accordingly, should be regarded as

meaning just this group of facts and nothing more. It does not mean that there is any other consciousness than that of individual minds. It does mean that individual minds act simultaneously in like ways and continually influence one another; and that certain mental products result from such combined mental action which could not result from the thinking of an individual who had no communication with fellow-beings."[1]

Just so far, it may well be supposed, and no farther may we go, in theology, in moral and spiritual inferences from the unity of the race. We are members one of another for good and for ill, one in the unity of the inevitable, mutual influence of like-minded persons.

## II. DEEPENING THE SENSE OF SIN

And this conviction, in the second place, not only deepens our sense of the real unity of the race, it deepens also the sense of sin. And we can hardly separate here the influence of the third element of the social consciousness—the sense of the value and

[1] *The Elements of Sociology*, pp. 119, 120, 121.

sacredness of the person. As against a rather wide-spread and often expressed contrary feeling, this deepening sense of sin may yet, it is believed, be truthfully maintained, *so far as the social consciousness is really making itself felt*. There are some disintegrating tendencies here, no doubt, like the tendency under some applications of evolution and evolutionary philosophy to turn all sin into a necessary stage in the evolution. But had not Drummond reason to say: "There is one theological word which has found its way lately into nearly all the newer and finer literature of our country. It is not only *one* of the words of the literary world at present, it is perhaps *the* word. Its reality, its certain influence, its universality, have at last been recognized, and in spite of its theological name have forced it into a place which nothing but its felt relation to the wider theology of human life could ever have earned for a religious word. That word, it need scarcely be said, is sin."[1]

Contrast this modern sense of sin with the almost total lack of it among even so gifted a people of the ancient world as the Greeks, and feel the significance of the phenomenon.

[1] *The Ideal Life*, p. 149.

But it is particularly to be noted that this sense of sin in literature is largely due to a keener social conscience. In fact, if the social consciousness is not a thoroughly fraudulent phenomenon, it could hardly be otherwise; for the social consciousness, in its very essence, is a sense of what is due a person; and sin is always ultimately against a person, failure to be what one ought to be in some personal relation, including finally all the relations of the kingdom of God. We simply cannot deepen the sense of the meaning and value of personal relations, and not deepen, at the same time, the sense of sin. The meaning of the Golden Rule, and so the sense of sin under it, deepens inevitably with every step into the meaning of the person. If the one great commandment is love, then the sin of which men need most of all to be convicted is lack of love.

The self-tormenting and fanciful sins of some of our devotional books very likely are less felt. But the very existence of the social consciousness seems to be proof that there never was so much good, honest, wholesome sense of real sin as to-day—such sin as Christ himself recognizes in his own judgment test.

It may be that, in temporary absorption in the human relations, the relation of all this to the All-Father may seem forgotten; even so, we may well remember Christ's "Ye did it unto me." But, in fact, we must go much farther and say, The social consciousness can only be true to itself finally, as it goes on to see its acts in the light, most of all, of that single, personal relation which underlies all others. We have already seen that the social consciousness requires for its own justification its grounding in the manifest trend of the living will of God. With this felt identification of the will of God with love for men, men can still less shake off easily the conviction of sin.

Probably, most religious men argue a diminishing sense of sin, because they feel that less is made of those consequences of sin which have been usually connected with the future life. There may be real danger here from shallow thinking; but here, too, the social consciousness has only to be true to itself to be saved from any shallow estimate of the consequences of sin here or hereafter. As the sin itself is always, finally, in personal relations, so the most terrible results of sin, in this life and in all lives, are

in personal relations. What it costs the man himself in cutting him off from the relations in which all largeness of life consists, what it costs those who love him, what it costs God,—this alone is the true measure of sin. So judged, sin itself is feared as never before. Surely, Principal Fairbairn is right in saying: "And so even within Christendom, sin is never so little feared as when hell most dominates the imagination; it needs to be looked at as it affects God, to be understood and feared."[1] But it is the inevitable result of the social consciousness to bring us to the deepest conviction of all these personal relations, and so to the deepest conviction of sin.

Another consideration deserves attention. We have a growing conviction that our social ideal is personally realized only in Christ, and we have given unequaled attention to that life and have such knowledge of it, in its detailed applications, as no preceding generation has ever had. This simply means that we have both such a sense of our moral calling, and are face to face with such a living standard, as must steadily deepen in us a genuine sense of real sin, in our falling so far short of the spirit of Christ.

[1] *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 455.

Theology needs, further, to make unmistakably clear, and to use the fact, that *this mutual influence of men holds for good* as well as for evil; that few greater lies have ever been told, than the insinuation that only evil is contagious, the good not. And this conviction of the contagion of the good, of mutual influence for good, concerns theology particularly in three ways, all of which may be regarded simply as illustrations or aspects of the one kingdom of God. We are members one of another (1) in attainment of character, (2) in personal relation to God, and (3) in confession of faith. And each of these forms of mutual influence will need careful attention.

In considering separately here attainment of character and relation to God, it is not meant for a moment to admit that separation of ethics and religion which has been already denied, but only to single out for distinct treatment the one most important and fundamental relation of life—relation to God. We are certainly never to forget that the indispensable condition of right relations to God, is that a man should have been won into willingness to share God's own righteous purpose concerning men.

## III. MUTUAL INFLUENCE FOR GOOD IN THE ATTAINMENT OF CHARACTER

We know no deeper law in the building of character, than that righteous character comes through that association with the best in which there is mutual self-giving. The problem of character implies not only a bare recognition of a man's moral freedom, but a sacred respect at every point for his personality. If a man is ever to have character at all, it must be absolutely his own; he must be won freely into it. In this free winning to character, no association counts for its most that is not mutual. I become in character most certainly and rapidly like that man with whom I constantly am, to whose influence I most fully surrender, and who gives himself most completely to me.

We may analyze the phenomenon psychologically, as, indeed, we have already done in showing that a true personal relation to Christ necessarily carries with it a true ethical life. And that which held true for religion cannot be false for theology, we may be sure. But, in any case, we always come back finally to the fact, that character is truly and inevitably contagious in an association in which there is

mutual surrender. Character is caught, not taught. The inner strength of another life to which we surrender is, as Phillips Brooks somewhere says, "directly transmissible." I suspect that the ultimate psychological principle at work here is that of the impulsiveness of consciousness. But, whether that be true or not, the witness to this contagion is widespread among students of men. "The greatest gift the hero leaves his race," one of our great novelists says, "is to have been a hero." In almost identical language, a great ethical and philosophical writer adds: "The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves. Their task, be it ever so glorious, is historical and transient, the majesty of their spirit is essential and eternal."

But one might still think, here, only of an example. The other life, however, must be more to me than mere example. For the highest attainment in character I need the association of some highest one, who will give himself to me unreservedly. Redemption to real righteousness of life cannot be without cost to the redeemer. And it is a psychologist, facing the ultimate problem of will-strengthening, who urges in words that might seem

almost to look to Christ: "The prophet has drunk more deeply than any one of the cup of bitterness; but his countenance is so unshaken, and he speaks such mighty words of cheer, that his will becomes our will, and our life is kindled at his own."[1] It *is* the one great certain road to character — as it is to appreciation of every value — to stay in the presence of the best, in self-surrender to it. No wonder Christ said, "I am the Way."

1. *The Application to the Problem of Redemption.*—It is hardly possible to ignore this one great known law of character-making, which the social consciousness so presses upon us, in any thinking that is for a moment worth while concerning our redemption by Christ. And whatever our point of view, this consideration ought to have weight with us. Nay, must we not make it necessarily the very center of all our thought here? For all the realities in this problem of redeeming a man from sin to righteousness are intensely personal, ethical, spiritual. Now, are we to reach a deeper view of redemption, by turning away from the deepest ethical fact to the unethical? Do we so ground our view the more securely? Is there something holier

[1] James, *Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 579.

than the holy ethical will seen realized in Christ's life and death? For, if it is the will in his death by which we are sanctified,[1] there can be no sharp separation of the life and death. Must we not rather expect that the clearest light, on the holiest in God and our personal relation to him, will be thrown by the holiest we know in life, in our human personal relations?

Is not the precise method of redemption, then, to no small degree, cleared for us right here, in this conviction of the social consciousness of the contagion of the good in a self-surrendering association — the only solidarity of which we can be certain? Christ saves us, in the only certain way we know that any man is ever saved to better living, through direct contagion of character, through his immediate influence upon us. The power of the influence of a redeeming person must depend upon two facts: the richness of the self that is given, and the depth of the giving. The supremely redeeming power must be the giving of the richest self, unto the uttermost. God has not yet done his best for men, until he gives himself in the fullest manifestation which can be made

[1] Cf. Hebrews, 10:10.

through man to men, and gives to the uttermost, with no drawing back from any cost. Is it not because, after all, back of all theories and even in spite of theories, men have seen in the life and death of Christ just this eternal giving of God himself, that they have been caught up into some sharing of the same spirit, and so felt working directly and immediately upon them the supremest redeeming power the world knows? The cross of Christ has been God's not only *saying*, "I will help that child to conquer himself, whatever it costs me," but God doing it, and perpetually doing it. Not less than that must be the cost of a man's redemption.

Character is directly transmissible in an association in which there is mutual self-giving. It is most easily so transmissible, only at its highest, in its most perfect manifestation, in its completest self-giving at any cost.

The self-giving on the part of one trying to win another into character must precede the self-giving of the sinner; for the sinner's own willingness to yield himself to the influence of the character of the other must first of all be won. This initial winning of the coöperative will of the other is the heart of the whole battle. And here the power

relied on is not only the unconscious contagion and imitation of character that enlists a man's interest almost by surprise, but also the mightiest influence men know in breaking down the resisting will and winning men consciously and with final abandon—the influence of a patient, long-suffering, persistent, self-sacrificing love that cannot give the sinning one up.

Most certainly, then, redemption cannot be without cost to the redeemer of men—not only that cost to the hero of the superior showing of superior character in a superior task, but that other cost, indissolubly linked indeed with this, of reverently, patiently, to the bitter end, helping another to conquer himself—the inevitable suffering of all redemptive endeavor for those whom one loves. This involves (1) suffering in contact with sin, (2) suffering in the rejection by those sinning, and most of all, (3) suffering in the sin itself of those one loves because one loves them—suffering which is the more intense, the more one loves.

2. *The Consequent Ethical and Spiritual Meaning of Substitution and Propitiation.*—Can we go yet a step farther here? It may be fairly taken for granted that where the

church has strongly and persistently stood for certain modes of putting a doctrine—though the precise putting may be unfortunate—that in all probability there is there some real and important truth after which the consciousness of the church is dimly feeling. Starting, now, from this same great law of the contagion of character and the inevitable influence of an association in which there is mutual self-giving, is it not possible to show that there is a strict ethical and spiritual sense that we can understand, in which Christ's suffering may be truly called vicarious, and himself a substitute for us, and a propitiation?

It is, of course, not for a moment forgotten that, in Dr. Clarke's language, "a God who will himself provide a propitiation has no need of one in the sense which the word has ordinarily borne. Some richer and nobler meaning must be present if the word is appropriate to the case."[1] But it is not likely that a purely ethical and spiritual view of the atonement, which sees the problem as a strictly personal one—and this seems to the writer the only true position—can ever succeed in the hearts of the great body of the

[1] *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 335.

membership of the churches, if it cannot show, at the same time, that it is able in some real way to take up into itself these thoughts of substitution and propitiation. The writer finds much of the old language about the atonement as offensive to his moral sense as any man well can. But that there is an absolutely universal human need for something like that to which the old language of substitution and propitiation looked, he cannot doubt. It seems to show itself in this, that no man with real moral sense, probably, cares to put himself at the end of his life, say, in the attitude of the Pharisee rather than in that of the Publican. If one sets aside all spectacular elements in the judgment, and even denies altogether any great single final assize for all men, still he cannot avoid the thought of some judgment upon his life. As Dr. Clarke says again: "We are not our own masters in going out of this world; we go we know not whither. Yet our going is not without its just and holy method. Our place and lot in the life that is beyond must be determined righteously, in accordance with the life that we have lived thus far, that the next stage in our existence may be what it ought to be."[1]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 459.

However, now, that judgment of God may be expressed, no man can hope to face the test proposed by Christ in the twenty-fifth of Matthew, still less the test implied in Christ's own life, and feel that he has *already* attained. He knows himself to be at best only a faulty growing child, with some real spirit of obedience in his heart. And it is particularly to be noted, that exactly that man must stand most definitely for the reality of some genuinely ethical judgment, who has most insisted upon the necessarily ethical character of the religious life. Moreover, the normal experience of the deepening Christian life is an increasing sense of sin. Upon this point, too, the social consciousness is witness.

What, now, makes it possible for a man to expect, in any sense, a favorable judgment of God upon his life? If God makes any separation of men in the world to come, he certainly cannot divide them into perfect and imperfect men. Judged by any complete standard, all are imperfect. Or if, without separation, God in any sense, in the most inner way, passes judgment, how does approval fall upon any? And upon whom does it fall? Must not every man who wishes to

be clear and honest with himself fairly face these questions?

And Christ's own thought of God as Father must be our key here. And the matter may well be counted worth a more careful analysis than it often gets. How does a father distinguish between what he calls an obedient and a disobedient child? Both are faulty. How in any fair sense may one be called obedient? To the earthly father, that child is called an obedient child, not who is deliberately setting his will against his father's with no intention to coöperate with the father's purpose for him, but whose loyal intention is to do the father's will, really to coöperate with the father in the father's own purpose for the child's life. When, now, this child is carried away by some gust of temptation and disobeys, and then returns in penitence to the father, evidently viewing the sin, so far as his experience allows, as the father views it, and heartily putting it away, the father, *either with or without penalty*, restores the child to full personal relation to himself; and that is the vital point. And, though he neither judges the past life as without failure, nor expects the future to be without failure, he approves the child, as in

a true sense obedient. He is an approved child.

What is it that satisfies the father in such a case? Upon what does he rely in his hope for matured character in the child? What, in biblical language, "covers" for the father the actual disobediences of the past and the certain disobediences of the future, and enables him in a sense to ignore both in his approval of the child? Certainly, the present purpose of the child, the child's honest intention to coöperate with the father in the father's purpose for him. Yes; but as certainly, it seems to the writer, *not that alone*. The father's hope for his child's steady growth in righteousness depends not only on the child's present intention, but much more upon the father's own intention never to give up in his attempt at any cost to help that child to conquer himself.[1] The father may be said here in a true sense to propitiate himself; and his own fixed purpose has become a partial substitute for the wavering purpose of the child.

And the child's full righteousness is seen, not merely in an attitude of immediate present obedience, but especially in his loyal

[1] Cf. Romans 8:26–39.

acceptance of his filial relation — in his honest surrender to his father's influence. And the father can now say, Because my child accepts heartily his relation to me, and honestly throws himself open to it to let it be to him all it can and work its own work in him, I may approve him; for this relation to me which he so takes has only to go on, to work out its complete results in a matured character. In the hearty acceptance of this filial relation to me, there is contained the promise of the end.

Just this attitude exactly, and no other, it seems to the writer, God takes toward men in his revelation in Christ. Christ is God's own showing forth of himself. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."[1] "Propitiation," Beysclag truly says, "is blotting out, making amends for sin in God's eyes. Now what can cover the sin of the world in God's eyes? Only a personality and a deed which contain the power of actually delivering the world from its sin."[2]

We have seen, it may be hoped, just how God's self-revealing in Christ does have this actual power, and becomes, thus, a true pro-

[1] II Corinthians, 5:19.

[2] *The Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. II, p. 448.

pitiation in the highest moral sense, in the only sense in which God can wish a propitiation, and in the only sense in which we can ever need a propitiation. Our final hope for that true salvation, which is the sharing of the life of God and the involved likeness of character with God, is in God's own long-suffering, redeeming activity. Only as *that* may be remembered, in connection with our surrender to it, may we hope to stand approved before the judgment of God. We are not judged alone before the judgment of God. In a very real sense the judge himself stands with us. Not what God is able to believe about this man thought of as standing alone, but what he may believe about this man standing in a living, surrendering association with himself, is the ground of judgment. We may not separate here the work of God and the work of Christ, as the New Testament does not separate them. In constant reliance upon the constant redeeming activity of the Father here and hereafter, we children go hopefully on our way.

Put into the language of the blood covenant, where the blood has all its significance as life—the giving of life, the sharing of life, the closest and most indissoluble union of

lives—this is to say, there is no atonement, no reconciliation, no remission of sins, no forgiveness — and these are all essentially identical terms — without shedding of blood, that is, without complete giving of life on both sides, Christ giving himself not only *for* us in seeking us out, but *to* us in complete reconciliation and renewal of life. It means that only God, the very life of God, sharing God's life, can really save one from his sins. God must pour his life into one, and he does, in Christ.

This seems to be the heart of the whole matter; but certain considerations may be still added, as indicating how far a purely ethical and spiritual view of the atonement may go, in meeting the human need expressed in these older terms of substitution and propitiation.

There must be a wrath of God against wilful sin, a complete disapproval of it, and all the more because God loves the sinner. God is a consuming fire for sin in us, because he loves us. That wrath cannot be propitiated, that disapproval cannot be satisfied, in any effective way, so long as the sin continues. The punishment of the sin in its inevitable consequences, will go on in the

very fidelity of God. But for any real satisfaction of God, the sin itself must cease, and there must be assurance of righteousness to come. The sinner must come to share God's hatred of the sin and God's positive purpose of love. Hence the expiation of the sin, the propitiation of the wrath of God, the satisfaction of God—so far as these terms still have meaning, and so far as they express Christ's work—consist (1) in winning men to repentance, to sharing God's hatred of their sin, (2) in helping men to a real power against sin, and (3) in the assurance of perfecting righteousness which is contained in the relation to God honestly accepted by men. When, now, the unfilial spirit is thus changed into a completely filial spirit — through the fullest acceptance by the child of the father's purpose for him, and through the child's throwing himself completely open to the influence of the father—the personal relation *is* thereby inevitably changed, personal reconciliation is achieved. It is impossible to think it otherwise. And so the chief pain in the previous relation is done away both for God and man; though the punishment, in the consequences of sin in other respects, is not thereby set aside.

But, further, so far now as the power of this new personal relation to God in Christ begins actively to counteract the consequences of sin in us, as it will assuredly do, God's work in Christ becomes a direct substitute for that punishment of us that would else inevitably follow. And yet the process is wholly ethical; for the results of righteousness can actually occur in us, only in so far as we come into harmony with Christ's purpose for us.

Even so far, we may believe, does the social consciousness, in its emphasis upon the mutual influence of persons go, in leading us into the secret of the attainment of character—into the heart of God's redemption of men.

### IV. MUTUAL INFLUENCE FOR GOOD IN OUR PERSONAL RELATION TO GOD

What, now, in the second place, does the mutual influence of men for good mean for theology in the individual relation to God? Here it may be said at once, that faith is as directly contagious as character.

1. *In Coming into the Kingdom.*—We are introduced through others into all spheres of

value, including friendship even with God. In the atmosphere of those who already feel the value, our interest is aroused; we find it possible at least to take those initial steps of a dawning attention, which give the value opportunity to make its own impression upon us, and bring us to an appreciation, to a faith of our own. Only so is that most difficult of all tasks in the redemption of a man—that first stirring of a new appetite, a new desire, a new aspiration, a new ideal—accomplished.

We are members one of another here to an extent that deserves ever fresh emphasis. We cannot too often say to ourselves, Had it not been that there were those who actually entered into the meaning of the revelation of God in Christ—who, in John's language, "beheld his glory"—the record of that revelation never could have come down to us. Christianity must have perished at its birth. "Hence," in the vital language of Herrmann, "the picture of his inner life could be preserved in his church or 'fellowship' alone. But, further, this picture so preserved can be understood only when we meet with men on whom it has wrought its effect. We need communion with Christians in order that,

from the picture of Jesus which his Brotherhood has preserved, there may shine forth that inner life which is the real heart of it. It is only when we see its effects, that our eyes are opened to its reality so that we may thereby experience the same effect. Thus we never apprehend the most important element in the historical appearance of Jesus until his people make us feel it. The testimony of the New Testament concerning Jesus is the work of his church, and its exposition is the work of the church, through the life which that church develops and gains for itself out of this treasure which it possesses."[1]

The Christian is no Melchizedek, then, without father or mother; he comes into life in a community of life, and usually, moreover, through the personal touch of some other individual life. It is the one primal law, of life through life.

2. *In Fellowship within the Kingdom.*—And not only in coming into the kingdom, but also within the religious fellowship of the kingdom, we are emphatically members one of another. In bringing us into that love which is God's own life, God evidently has

[1] *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 61; cf. p. 87.

no intention of allowing us to cut ourselves off from our brethren, to climb up to heaven by some little individual ladder of our own. That humility or open-mindedness, which constitutes the first beatitude and the initial step into the kingdom, and that self-sacrificing love, which constitutes the last beatitude and the crown of the Christian life, are both possible and cultivable only in personal relations to others. No man ever got them alone. And, for this very reason, in the discussion of the religious life, we found the New Testament guarding most carefully against all overestimation of marvelous experiences as such. For these tended to make a man feel that he had such an individual ladder of his own to heaven, and had no need, consequently, of his brethren; and so led him into the very reverse of the fundamental Christian qualities—into unteachableness instead of humility and open-mindedness, and into censoriousness instead of love. That objective attitude which is essential in all character and work and happiness, cannot be unimportant in our specifically religious life.

Even in this most individual relation to God, then, men's outlook is varied and but partial. We need to share, and can share, one

another's visions. The meaning of the many-sidedness of even a great human personality gets home to us only so—through the various impressions gained by different men. Much more can God be revealed to us, even approximately, only so. The great and surpassing value of the New Testament lies exactly herein, that it gives the varied impressions upon the first Christian generation of God's supreme revelation—the most important individual reflections of Christ. The New Testament comes to stand, thus, in no merely external and mechanically authoritative relation to the life and faith of the church, but in the most interior and vital relation. And Bible study gets a new significance for us, as we see it, as at one and the same time our chief way to our own vision of God's actual, concrete self-revelation, and our deliverance from our merely subjective dreaming. We come to share in some living way the vision of these others who have seen most directly and most largely.

3. *In Intercessory Prayer.*—One particular application to our religious life, of this conviction of the social consciousness of our mutual influence, seems worthy of mention—its bearing upon intercessory prayer. Few

other things in religion, one may suspect, seem less real to modern men. Can we ground the matter a little more deeply for ourselves, and give it reality, by showing its close connection with this deep-rooted conviction of the social consciousness?

We have already seen,[1] if character and love are to be realities to us, if the world is to be a real training-ground for moral character, and not a mere play-world — a nursery continually set to rights from without, that we must all be most closely knit together; that our choices must have effects in the lives of others; that we must be bound up in one bundle of life. And we do affect one another's lives in a thousand ways. In manifold directions we condition the happiness and temptations of one another. The unspoken mood of another, an expression of countenance, a tone, an emphasis, may affect our whole day.

Now, if the spiritual world is real at all, it is to be counted upon. Apparently, there is such a thing, for example, as a spiritual atmosphere in an audience — not, it may well be supposed, a magical matter, but really determined by the tone of the minds com-

[1] Cf. above, p. 32.

posing the audience. The actual mood of the hearers and of the speaker makes a difference. Results, great and important, are so changed often quite unconsciously. It may well be that God is the medium in all this. The attitude of the auditors is like unconscious, silent praying to God—the praying of their life, of their spirit.

But, whether one cares to look at this special case in such a way or not, we are, in any event, in our spiritual lives in the deepest way members one of another. Our spiritual condition inevitably affects others. We cannot sow to the flesh and reap life anywhere, in ourselves or in others. This is particularly true, of course, of those to whom we are bound in the closest life relations. That this is absolutely true in normal personal relations, when we are in the presence of our friends, all of us fully believe. The question simply is, May this law of mutual influence hold of those bound up with our lives even when they are distant from us or estranged? In giving the privilege of intercessory prayer, it may well be believed, God simply allows us to be, even then, what we are always so fully under other circumstances —an influence upon them, a condition of

the good and growth of others. *He simply allows the regular law of the spiritual and moral world to hold without exception.* We are still, though distant or estranged, members one of another. It would be a very human, defective, faulty God, who could not put us thus in touch with our loved ones everywhere. But this is possible through *him*, and therefore in prayer, and under strictly ethical and spiritual conditions, and not as a matter of mere whimsical and wilful will on our part, and it opens no door to magical superstition. Is not the recognition of the place and value of intercessory prayer, then, an only just extension of the prime conviction of the social consciousness?

### V. MUTUAL INFLUENCE FOR GOOD IN CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Theology has, once more, in the third place, to recognize the importance of mutual influence for good in confession of faith, in creeds. When, to-day, we seek the common grounds of belief for Christian thinkers, so far as the social consciousness really moves us, we approach the problem in a way somewhat different from that of previous genera-

tions. We do not now seek to elaborate a second, modern Westminster confession; nor do we seek a mere average of Christian ideas that in reality expresses no one's whole living thought. Still less is there sought the barest minimum of Christian belief. Rather, in harmony with the social consciousness, we seek a unity that is organic. Our age, therefore, must recognize that, in the confession of its faith as in all else, we are genuinely members one of another. The unity sought not only tolerates differences, but welcomes and justifies them, as themselves helps to a deeper unity. It believes in equality, but not in identity.

It is true that Christianity looks everywhere to life; and we may be sure that any statement of Christian doctrine that does not obviously bear on living is still inadequate and incorrect. It is true that we do well to emphasize the strictly religious and practical purpose of the Bible; that the Bible is interested in both nature and history so far and only so far as either reveals God and inspires to godly living. It is true that in all Christian thinking Christ is our ultimate appeal.

But, on the other hand, we must not confuse the issue. We cannot expect agreement

in detailed intellectual statements even with fullest loyalty to Christ, and the most earnest desire after truth. To each his own message. Nor can we confine, nor is it desirable to confine, expressions of Christian faith to the merely practical side. We need to seek to *understand* the meaning of our Christian experience, not only for the sake of our intellectual peace, but also for the sake of deepening our Christian experience itself. Now, it is here contended that in our confessions of Christian faith we need one another, and that complete uniformity of belief and statement is both impossible and undesirable.

1. *Complete Uniformity of Belief and Statement Impossible.*—It is impossible, for, in the first place, it is difficult, in any case, to tell our real inner creed. Some of its most important articles are quite certain to be implicit and unconfessed, even to ourselves. The only important creed, in the case of the individual, is that which finds its expression in life. There are assumptions implied in deeds and spirit; and the spirit of a man throws more light on his real creed than his formal statements do. His doctrines may be radical, his spirit thoroughly constructive, or *vice versa*. If all thought tends to pass into act,

as modern psychology insists, we have a right to urge that those articles of a man's creed which find expression in living, are for him the really important articles. The will has a creed, as well as the intellect, and the real creed is the creed of life rather than of lips; it is wrought out, rather than thought out. And this real, inner, living creed probably no man can state with accuracy even in his own case. And if he is ever able even approximately to do so, it will be at the end, rather than at the beginning, of his life's work and experience.

Moreover, complete uniformity of belief and statement is impossible, for, even exactly the same words cannot mean the same to different individuals, for they are interpreted out of a different experience; they cannot mean precisely the same thing, even to the same individual, at different times, for his interpreting experience, too, is a changing thing. We need sometimes to remind ourselves that there is never any literal transfer of thought from mind to mind, still less from statement to mind; all thinking of even the most passive kind has an element of creation in it, for terms must be interpreted, and the interpretation is inevitably limited by previous

experience. Sabatier[1] is quite right, therefore, in asserting that credal statements must change their meaning just as words change. But it is to be noted that this principle means not only that unalterable doctrine, in this sense, is impossible between the generations; but also that identical doctrine is impossible in the same generation.

Out of the different experiences, too, grow the different points of view and the different emphases. And these different points of view, and the different distribution of emphasis, give the same creed very different meanings for different men. It is as impossible to avoid this, as it is to avoid change and individuality. It is true of a man's creed as of his environment, that the only effective portions are those to which he attends—those which he emphasizes, not those to which he gives a bare assent; and this varying attention and emphasis cannot be the same in different individuals. The only logical outcome of a thorough-going attempt to reach an identical creed is the church of one member.

2. *Complete Uniformity of Belief and Statement Undesirable.*— But complete uniformity of belief and statement is not only impos-

[1] *The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their Power of Evolution.*

sible; it is undesirable. For, in the first place, it is only by these differing but supplementary finite expressions that we can approximate to the infinite truth. Like Leibnitz's mirrors in the market-place, it is only by combining the points of view of all that a complete representation is possible. We need one another here, as elsewhere; we need the fellowship of the church, and of the whole church; the strictly individual view must be fragmentary. Our message needs the supplement of the messages of others; through each member God has something unique to say. They without us, we without them, are not to be made perfect. We need to share, in such measure as is possible, the experiences of others; but this is possible only through vital contact.

Moreover, we are not to forget how truth comes—not by surrender of convictions, not by the silence of each, but by each standing earnestly for the truth which is given to him, in a union of conviction and charity. For only he who has convictions can be tolerant, as only he who has fears can be courageous.

Once more, we cannot and must not simply repeat each other. Nothing is so fatal to spiritual life as dishonesty. To attempt an

identical creed involves something of such untrue repetition of the experience of others. For, as Herrmann has said, doctrines are an expression of life *already present*, and are of value only so; they are not themselves a condition of life. If the doctrines we profess are not the honest expression of a real life in us, they are a hindrance, not a help. "Conscious untruth tends to drive from Christ."

For every one of these reasons, now, it is positively undesirable to forbid varying theories or to check the varied expressions of Christian faith, whether in accordance or not with certain standard formulas. A growing life requires a growing expression, which must be justified by its history, not dogmatically by reference to some supposed fixed standard of doctrine in the past. The very meaning and health of Christian fellowship demand that we should welcome and encourage the honest expression of the varied manifestations of the One Spirit, that we may be the more certain to get the whole truth, the whole life which God intends. We are members one of another, in doctrine as in life.

It becomes increasingly clear, thus, where the real Christian unity is, and where the

common grounds of Christian belief must be sought. The real unity of Christians is in their common life, in the common experience, in the possession of the common personal self-revelation of God in Christ, in the inworking of the One Spirit. It is the meaning of this one central Christian experience, which we strive to express in our doctrinal statements. Our *expressions* must vary; the life, the personal relation to God, is one. The best analogy we have of the case lies in what the same great friend means to different persons. Our creeds are at best poor and partial expressions of the meaning for us of the divine friendship, of God's self-revelation to us. It is, then, precisely in our Christian experience and in that personal relation to God revealed in Christ which makes a man a Christian at all, that all the common grounds of Christian belief lie.

The solution of Christian unity here, that is, is not by increasing abstraction, but by frank concreteness; not by false simplicity, but by living fullness; not by relation to propositions, but by relation to facts; not by emphasis on natural religion, but by emphasis on historical religion; not by bringing nature into prominence, but human nature;

not by relation to things, but by relation to persons, to the one great world fact, the one person, to Christ. "I am the Way." The Christian faith is faith in a person; the Christian confession of faith is confession of Christ. And if we are really in earnest with this word Christian, we already have our basis of unity in our personal relation to Christ, our common Lord. But that personal relation to God in Christ is always more than a credal statement *can* express, though we may never cease to attempt such expression; and for the sake of the larger realization, by ourselves and by the church, of the meaning of the personal relation to Christ, we must welcome every honest expression of his Christian life by another. Altogether, we shall at best but dimly shadow forth its full meaning.

And such a concrete relation to the personal Christ is a far better test of genuine Christian faith than any creed, whether more or less elaborate, since in the personal relation character inevitably comes out; and any test that allows even for the moment the ignoring of the ethical, cannot remain even intellectually adequate, for Christian doctrine looks always and certainly to life. Even if one is thinking *only* of the correct intel-

lectual expression of the common Christian life—the maintenance of orthodoxy, so far as that is possible to us—it should be remembered that the most conservative of all influences is love of a person, and, by no means, subscription to a set of propositions. Would Christ so think? Would he so speak?—these are questions far more certain to keep Christian *thinking* true, than any intellectual test of man's devising.

We do not expect, therefore, we do not seek, any common grounds of belief for Christian thinkers, other than are involved in the simple fact that we are Christians at all, in the common recognition of the revelation of God in Christ—of the Lordship of Christ. We confess Christ. For, "no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit." And "other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Now, in this common confession, it is here especially maintained, we are, as everywhere, "members one of another" and need one another; and the unity we seek, therefore, is not the unity of identical credal statement—which can only make us isolated atoms not necessary to one another—but the

deeper and larger organic unity of the richly varying manifestations of the common life in Christ. We may come, through the witness of another, to an appreciation of Christ which is really our own, but to which we should not have come if the other had not spoken. Men do mutually influence one another for good, in their confessions of Christian faith.

### VI. THE CONSEQUENT IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

In this recognition of the vital and essential importance of mutual influence in the attainment of character, in the individual relation to God, and in creed, theology is brought to a new sense of the significance of the doctrine of the church. On the one hand, it cannot derive its importance from having to do with an unalterably fixed and infallibly organized external authority; and, on the other hand, it can be no longer an unimportant addendum concerned only with methods of organization and government, and with ecclesiastical ordinances and procedure. So far as the social consciousness has influence upon theology at this point,

theology must see that the doctrine of the church is the doctrine of that priceless, living, personal fellowship, in which alone Christian character, Christian faith, and Christian confession can arise and can continue. The doctrine of the church becomes thus the doctrine of the very life and growth of Christianity in the world. It is the doctrine of the real kingdom of God, Christ's own great central theme.

## CHAPTER XII

### *THE INFLUENCE OF THE DEEPENING SENSE OF THE VALUE AND SACREDNESS OF THE PERSON UPON THEOLOGY*

IN the discussion of the influence of the social consciousness upon theological doctrine, we turn now to ask concerning the third element of the social consciousness, How does the deepening sense of the value and sacredness of the person affect theology?

And with this sense of the value and sacredness of the person, we may well include, so far as the influence upon theology is concerned, the remaining elements of the social consciousness — the deepening sense of obligation, and of love. For, as we have already seen, the sense of obligation and of love follow so inevitably from a deep sense of the value and sacredness of the person, that it would be a needless refinement, probably, to try to analyze out their separate influence upon theological thinking. We should find them all leading us to essentially the same great emphases.

When, now, through the social consciousness, the personal has become the supreme value for us, and regard for it our eternal motive and goal, we cannot fail to demand that theology give a real personality to God and man — a consciousness marked, in Professor Howison's language, with "that recognition and reverence of the personal initiative of other minds which is at once the sign and the test of the true person."[1]

## I. THE RECOGNITION OF THE PERSONAL IN MAN

In the first place, the social sense of the value and sacredness of the person will emphasize the full personality of man.

1. *Man's Personal Separateness from God.*— The sense of the value of the person cannot admit for a moment such a one-sided emphasis upon a universal cosmic evolution, or upon the immanence of God, as should make impossible a true personality in man. It seeks, in its view of both God and man, a really "*personal* idealism." It does not forget, but earnestly asserts, the dependence of all other spirits upon God; and, consequently, looks for no metaphysical separateness in this sense

[1] *The Limits of Evolution*, p. x.

from God. But a genuine recognition of the personality of man does require that man be conceived as separate from God in just this sense: (1) that he has a clear self-consciousness of his own, and (2) that he has real moral initiative, which makes his volition truly his own. These two factors constitute all of separateness that need be demanded for man. Possessing these, he is "outside of God" in the only sense in which a "personal idealism" feels concerned to assert separateness. But for these factors it is concerned; for without them, it believes, no truly ideal view, no moral world, no religious life, are possible.

2. *Emphasis Upon Man's Moral Initiative.* —In particular, the application of the sense of the value and sacredness of the person in theology, means the emphatic recognition of the moral initiative of man — of the possession of a real will of his own. The whole social consciousness, especially in this third element of it, rests upon the assumption that man has worth, as a being capable of character as well as of happiness, and so deserves in some worthy sense to be called a child of God. If the social consciousness is, as we have seen, with any fairness to be called the recognition

of the fully personal,[1] this reverence for the personal initiative of men cannot be lacking in it. Its influence upon theology at this point, therefore, is hardly to be doubted.

And theology itself is vitally concerned. For the whole possibility of the conceptions of government and providence requires this. These terms are words without meaning, having absolutely no place in theology or philosophy, if man has no moral initiative. Nor should it escape our notice, that we strike at the very root of all possible reverence for God, if we deny a real initiative to man. We have no possible philosophic explanation of either sin or error, consistent with any real reverence for God, if a true human will is denied.[2] In Professor Bowne's vigorous language: In a system of necessity "every thought, belief, conviction, whether truth or superstition, arises with equal necessity with every other. . . . On this plane of necessary effect the actual is all, and the ideal distinctions of true and false have as little meaning as they would have on the plane of mechanical forces. . . . The

[1] Cf. above, pp. 22, 66, 106.

[2] See especially Bowne, *Theory of Thought and Knowledge*, pp. 239, 377, 378; James, *The Will to Believe*, pp. 145 ff.

only escape from the overthrow of reason involved in the fact of error lies in the assumption of freedom." Moreover, if real human initiative is denied to men, we conceive God as having really less respect for persons in his dealing with them, than the most elementary ethics requires of men in their relations to one another. A one-sided doctrine of immanence, thus, degrades both man and God. It degrades man, in denying to him a true personality, and so making him simply a thing. It degrades God, in making him the real responsible cause of all sin and error, and in making him treat possible persons as things. The influence of the social consciousness, which leads us to measure the moral growth of a man and of a civilization by the deepening sense of reverence for the person, is fairly decisive at this point. It *must* see in God the most absolute guarding of man's personality, and especially of his moral initiative.

3. *Man, a Child of God.*—The Christian faith, that man is a child of God, is a faithful expression of the insistence of the social consciousness upon the recognition of the full personality of man. It expresses both man's entire dependence upon God for his being

and maintenance, and at the same time his infinite value and sacredness as a spirit made in the image of God, capable of indefinite progress, and capable of personal relation to God. It voices thus Christianity's characteristic "humbly-proud" conception of man—humble in view of the eternal and infinite plans of God; proud, as "called to an imperishable work in the world." It is, indeed, but a concrete statement of that faith in love at the heart of things, and in the all-embracing plan of a faithful God, which we found required, if the social consciousness itself was to have any justification.[1]

## II. THE RECOGNITION OF THE PERSONAL IN CHRIST

In the second place, under this impulse of the sense of the value and sacredness of the person, theology is likely to insist on the recognition of the personal in the conception of Christ.

1. *Christ a Personal Revelation of God.*—This recognition of the personal in Christ will mean, first, that we are to conceive Christ as a *personal* revelation of God, rather than as

[1] Cf. above, p. 44 ff

containing in himself a divine substance.[1] It cannot forget, that if God is a person, and men are persons, the adequate self-revelation of God to men can be made only in a truly personal life; and that men need above all, in their relation to God, some manifestation of his ethical will, and this can be shown only in the character of a person. A merely metaphysical conception of the divinity of Christ in terms of substance or essence, as these are commonly thought, must, therefore, wholly fail to satisfy. We must be able to recognize and bow before the personal will of the personal God revealed in Christ, if we are really to find God through him. A strong sense of the personal, then, such as the social consciousness evinces, must see in Christ, above all, a personal revelation of a person.

2. *Emphasizing the Moral and Spiritual in Asserting the Supremacy of Christ.*—This implies that the dominant sense of the value and sacredness of the person will certainly tend to bring into prominence the moral and spiritual in asserting the supremacy of Christ, rather than the metaphysical or the simply miraculous. So far as these latter come into its representation at all, they will follow rather

[1]See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 241 ff.

than precede, and be accepted because of the moral and spiritual, or as simply working hypotheses enabling us to bring into a thought-unity what we have to recognize in the moral and spiritual realm. If one faces the matter fully and frankly, is it not plain that Christians of all shades of belief are increasingly finding the real reason for their faith in Christ in his moral and spiritual supremacy? Many may choose to *express* their faith in him, when once reached, in terms of the miraculous or metaphysical; but the miraculous and the metaphysical are not the primary *reasons* for their faith. It is the inner spirit of Christ himself which really masters us and calls out our confident faith and our eager submission. And it is only when we have already gotten this sense of the stupendousness of his personality, that the so-called miraculous in his life becomes to our thought natural and fitting, and we are driven to think him standing in some unique relation to God and so requiring to be conceived in unique metaphysical terms.

It is easy, no doubt, to indulge in a false polemic against the miraculous and metaphysical. One of the surest bits of autobiography we have from Christ, the narrative of

the temptations, implies, as Sanday has acutely pointed out,[1] the clear consciousness on the part of Christ of the possession of what we call supernatural powers. It is a far less simple problem to rid the gospels of the miraculous element, than our age, with its greatly exaggerated estimate of the mathematico-mechanical view of the world, is likely to think. The so-called miraculous in connection with Christ is not to be impatiently and dogmatically set aside.[2] So, too, the demand of thought, that we form finally some metaphysical conception of the great personality which we meet in Christ cannot be denied as wholly illegitimate. All this is to be freely granted and asserted.

But it is of the greatest importance for Christian thought, that it still keep Christ's own absolute subordination of both the miraculous and metaphysical to the moral and the spiritual. The same narrative of the temptation, that so clearly implies supernatural powers in Christ, has its whole point in Christ's answering determination absolutely to subordinate these supernatural powers to moral and spiritual ends. His

[1] Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 626.
[2] See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, Chaps. VI and VII.

whole ministry evinces the greatest pains upon this point. And he evidently thinks a theory of his metaphysical relation to God (as ordinarily conceived) of so little vital importance that even such slight hints as we get of it in the New Testament apparently do not come from him at all. The present tendency, therefore, naturally demanded by the social consciousness, to emphasize the moral and spiritual in Christ in asserting his supremacy, is quite in harmony with Christ's own insistence. He will be followed for what he is in himself.

The real supremacy of Christ, his truest divinity, we may be sure, comes out for our time in those statements which we are able to make concerning his inner spirit. Here, and here only, the real power of his personality gets hold upon us. What are these grounds of the supremacy of Christ? How is it that we come to God through him?

3. *The Moral and Spiritual Grounds of the Supremacy of Christ.*[1]—(1) In the first place, *Jesus Christ is the greatest in the greatest sphere*, that of the moral and spiritual; and this, by

[1] I aim here to bring out with some fullness the significance of the propositions briefly summarized in the *Reconstruction in Theology*, p. 244; and I venture to repeat, also, two quotations from that book, because they fit so closely into the argument here.

common consent of all men. Both the depth and the consensus of conviction concerning Christ are profoundly significant. If our earth has ever seen one of whom it could be truly said, He is a moral and spiritual authority, preëminently the one great authority in this greatest sphere,—that person is Jesus Christ. Seeing the moral problem more broadly than any other ever saw it, tracing the motives of life more deeply than any other ever traced them, applying those principles of the life which he sees with a tact and delicacy and skill that no other ever approached, speaking with an authority in this moral and spiritual sphere to which no other can for a moment lay claim,—this man is easily the greatest in the greatest sphere.

It is, perhaps, to say only the same thing in a little different way, when one says with Fairbairn, that Christ is transcendent among founders of religion, "and to be transcendent here is to be transcendent everywhere, for religion is the supreme factor in the organizing and the regulating of our personal and collective life."[1] The present age is, more than any other, the age of the scientific study of religion. The last forty years, indeed,

[1] *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 378.

have seen such attention to the study of comparative religion as the world never saw before. What has been the outcome of that study? To make the relative position of Jesus among the founders of religion lower? I do not so understand it. No, the outcome is such that it is a manifestly inadequate statement to say, that he is transcendent among the founders of religion. The very most that we may hope to say about the founder of any other religion is, that in some single particular at a long distance he can be brought into comparison with Jesus. But let one think for a moment what it means for a man to be a founder of religion. We talk of leadership. Do we know what a founder of religion does? He makes the light, in which millions of men look upon all the events of their life, in which they see the past of the world's history, in which they look forward to the entire future. The very mood and atmosphere of men's lives are determined by these founders of religion; and among these preëminent leaders, Jesus, beyond all mistake, is transcendent.

Let the nature of his kingdom, too, be his witness. He calmly aims to found a kingdom that shall be spiritual, universal,

eternal. One must face the fact that this man of Nazareth in Syrian Galilee, purposes in coolness of deliberation to found a kingdom that shall be absolutely spiritual, that shall make no appeal to any of the lower elements of man; one must see that this man, in those temptations through which he passed concerning the form of his work, deliberately set aside the kingdom by bread, the kingdom by marvel and ecstasy, and the kingdom by force, and purposed to found a kingdom solely upon moral and spiritual forces. And observe that he confidently expects this kingdom to be universal — appealing to men of all races and of all times, and to be eternal — still standing when all else shall have passed away. And upon his belief in this character of his kingdom he stakes his life, and calmly gives to himself as the goal of his life the establishment of just such a kingdom; and remains to the end confident of his success. The mere vitality of will in such a purpose is hard to take in, and alone may well give us pause.

And because he is the greatest in the greatest sphere, transcendent among founders of religion, the founder of a kingdom spiritual, universal, and eternal, he becomes

for us a "personalized conscience," a spiritual, moral authority for us even beyond our own conscience—an authority that grows upon us with our growth, and submission to which is earth's highest moral test.

(2) And there must be added to this first proposition, that Jesus is the greatest in the greatest sphere, a second: *He alone is the sinless and impenitent one.* And it is to be noticed that it is this man who sees more clearly than any other the moral and spiritual, who knows, as no other does, what character is and what moral life means,—it is he, who claims to be the sinless one. No other ever intelligently made this claim; for no other was it ever intelligently made. The words of the great historian Ranke seem to us to be simple truth when he says: "More guiltless and more powerful, more exalted and more holy has naught ever been on earth than his conduct, his life, and his death. The human race knows nothing that could be brought even afar off into comparison with it." Only such an one could intelligently make for himself the claim of sinlessness. And for no other was this claim of sinlessness ever intelligently made. Men know each other too well to make it for others when moral con-

sciousness has fully awakened. But he fights his battle in the wilderness, and there is no record of failure so far as he himself can see it, and none that disciple ever ascribed.

And this claim of sinlessness for Christ is to be urged, not so much because of any special statements by Christ as because of that remarkable fact to which Dr. Bushnell has called attention,—his impenitence. Jesus alone among all good men is a man of "impenitent piety;" and by this he is marked off absolutely from every other good man. What happens in the life of any other good man is this: that, as he goes forward, the sense of sin grows upon him, the ideal rises before him and he feels increasingly that his own life is inferior to it. Of Jesus this is not true. He shows no sign of consciousness of failure. There is no evidence that he feels that he has fallen short in any degree. He is absolutely without that universal characteristic of all other good men, absolutely without penitence. Contrast him for a moment with the man, who perhaps all would agree was the greatest of all his disciples, the man to whose devotion there seems to be no limit—the Apostle Paul; and notice, that years after his persecution of the church and of the

cause of Jesus, with growing sense of what Jesus is, and of his own inexhaustible debt to him, there comes over him with increasing, not lessening, power the sense of his sin, and he writes to the Ephesians, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given me that I might preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" and in one of the very last letters that comes down to us from him, says again, "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." What evidence have we that Christ ever felt in the slightest degree such penitence?

(3) But more than this is true. *With the highest ideal, Jesus not only does not consciously fall short of it, but consciously rises up to it*, and, as Herrmann says, "compels us to admit that he does rise to it." It were very much that a man with any ideal, however inferior, should be able to say to himself, I have not fallen short of this ideal; but that one, who sees more clearly than any other in the realm of the moral and spiritual, and who has an ideal of simply absolute love and of unbounded trust in God,—that he should show not only no consciousness of

falling short, but should consciously rise to his ideal and compel us to admit that he rises to it: this is a fact unparalleled in the history of the world. It is far more than mere sinlessness; there is here a positiveness of moral achievement so great—a fact so tremendous—that we seem able but feebly to take it in.

(4) And even that is not all. *Jesus has such a character that we can transfer it feature by feature to God*, not only with no sense of blasphemy, not only with no sense of his coming short, but with complete satisfaction. I do not now ask at all as to any man's metaphysical theory about Jesus Christ; I only ask that it be noticed that those who question common theories altogether still get their ideal of God from Jesus Christ; and that this is the wonderful thing that has happened on our earth: that there has once lived a man—daily moving about among men, a concrete circumstantial account of whose life in many particulars we have—the features of whose character one can transfer absolutely to God and say, That is what I mean by God. One simply cannot add anything to the character of God himself in the highest moments of his imagination, that is

not already revealed in Jesus Christ. I take it that the words of Fairbairn are literally true: he was "the first being who had realized for men the idea of the Divine." When, therefore, Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us," he could only reply as he might any day to us, "Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

(5) And one cannot stop here. *Jesus is consciously able to redeem all men.* With such sense of the meaning of sin and of moral conduct as no other ever had, understanding, therefore, the sin and need of men as no other ever did, and having such a vision of what it is perfectly to share the life of God as no other ever had, still, facing the masses of men, he could say to himself, "I am able to take these men and lift them into the very presence of God and present them spotless before the throne of his glory." Have we taken in what it means, that, in the consciousness of a man in form like ourselves, there could be, even for a moment, the actual belief that he was the one that was to take away the sin of the world, and had power to redeem men absolutely unto God? In

another's words: "Jesus knows no more sacred task than to point men to his own person." He is himself God's greatest gift, himself "the way, the truth, the life,"—not only fighting his own battles, but consciously able to redeem all men.

(6) This simply implies, as Dr. Denison has suggested, that *Jesus has such God-consciousness and such sense of mission as would simply topple any other brain that the world has ever known into insanity*, but which simply keeps him sweet, normal, rational, living the most wholesome and simple and noble life the world has ever seen. How are we to explain that fact? On the one hand, the sense of being of even a little importance in the kingdom of God proves singularly intoxicating to men. How often, when one is strongly possessed by the idea that he is a special channel of manifestation for God, do moral sanity, influence, and character all suffer! On the other hand, there is no burden of suffering that men can bear so great as suffering in the sin of one loved—thus bearing the sin of another. But here is one who can believe that, when men come to him and simply see him as he is, they catch their best vision of God; here is one who bears con-

sciously the sin of all men, and who can believe that he has absolute power to revolutionize the lives of other men and make them what they were meant originally to be, children of God; and yet, believing this, can, under that consciousness, keep sweet and normal, wholesome and simple, energetically ethical and thoroughly rational,—can keep sane. Indeed, he lives a life so sane, that, to pass even from some of our best religious books into the simple atmosphere of the story of his life often seems like passing from the super-heated, artificially lighted, heavily perfumed and exhausted atmosphere of the crowded drawing-room into the open fresh air of day under the heaven of God. In the very act of the most stupendous self-assertion, Jesus can still characterize himself as "meek and lowly of heart," and we feel no self-contradiction—so completely has he harmonized for even our unconscious feeling his transcendent self-consciousness and his humble simplicity of life. Has the world anywhere a phenomenon comparable to this?

(7) In consequence of all this, *Jesus is in fact the only person in the history of the race who can call out absolute trust.* As little children, we knew something of what it meant to have

complete trust. There were a few years when it seemed to us that there was nothing in either power or character that was not true of our fathers and mothers. We soon lost such trust, even as children. Is there any way back to the childlike spirit? Let us ponder these golden words of Herrmann: "The childlike spirit can only arise within us when our experience is the same as a child's; in other words, when we meet with a personal life which compels us to trust it without reserve. Only the person of Jesus can arouse such trust in a man who has awakened to moral self-consciousness. If such a man surrenders himself to anything or any one else, he throws away not only his trust, but himself." There has been one life lived on earth, in whose hands one may put himself with absolute confidence and have no fear as to the result. Jesus, and Jesus alone, can call out absolute trust.

(8) Moreover, *Jesus is the only life ever lived among men in whom God certainly finds us, and in whom we certainly find God.* And, once again, I am not now asking whether one is able to come to any theory of the nature of Christ. That is a matter of comparative indifference. The great fact is this: That

there has been lived among us men such a life that, if a man will simply put himself in the presence of it and stay there, he will have brought home to him with unmistakable conviction the fact that God is, and is touching him and that he is touching God; that, coupled with such a sense as he never had before of his sin, there will be also the sense of forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and so, such evidence of the contact of God with his life as he can find nowhere else. So Harnack believes: "When God and everything that is sacred threaten to disappear in the darkness, or our doom is pronounced; when the mighty forces of inexorable nature seem to overwhelm us, and the bounds of good and evil to dissolve; when, weak and weary, we despair of finding God at all in this dismal world,—it is then that the personality of Christ may save us."

(9) And all this means, finally, that *Jesus is for us the ideal realized.* Let not the commonplaceness of the words rob us of their meaning. The fact is far enough from the commonplace. Philosophy must always tell us that we have no right to expect anywhere a realized ideal, except in the absolute whole of things. Certainly, we never find in any

of the inferior spheres a fully realized ideal. What does it mean, then, that in this highest of all spheres, the sphere of the moral and spiritual life, we have the ideal realized; that our very highest vision is a fact? What is there that one would add to, what, that one would take away from, the life of Christ, that it might be more completely than it is the ideal realized?

"But Thee, but Thee, O Sovereign Seer of time,
But Thee, O poet's Poet, wisdom's tongue,
But Thee, O man's best Man, O love's best Love,
O perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King or Priest,—
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,
What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's, or death's,
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou crystal Christ?"

4. *Christ's Double Uniqueness.*—It seems hardly possible to do justice to the facts now passed in review, without recognizing, at least, that they point to a double uniqueness on the part of Christ in his relation to God, reflected in his own language concerning himself and in the spontaneous confessions of his disciples in all times. He alone,

in the emphatic sense, is *the* Son. The contrasts between Christ and other men, which the simple facts of the life and consciousness of Christ have compelled us to make, naturally, then, demand recognition from thought. The recognition of the facts *is* the vital matter, but thought can hardly see them unmoved. How are we to *think* of Christ? With clear remembrance, now, that Christian teaching itself insists upon the kinship of God and men; that absolute barriers, therefore, cannot anywhere be set up; that a revelation unrelated to all else could be no revelation; and that Christ himself often pointed out the likeness between his own life and work and those of his disciples;—still we may not ignore actual differences, and must honestly strive to do justice to them in our own conception of Christ. One may not forget that there is much here that we can hardly hope ever to fathom; and that into this secret of Christ's relation to the Father theology has often tried to press with a precision of statement that was quite beyond its possible knowledge, and that damaged rather than helped the religious consciousness; but one may try to think in simple, straightforward fashion

what the facts mean. Now these actual and momentous moral and spiritual differences already pointed out seem, at least, to assert, I say, a genuine double uniqueness in Christ. Christ's relation to God is absolutely unique, that is, in two senses: in the absolutely unique purpose of God concerning him; in the absolutely perfect response of Christ to that purpose. If one chooses to use the language, he may say, that the first uniqueness is metaphysical; the second, ethical.[1]

First, then, God has a purpose concerning Christ, that he has concerning no other, for he purposes to make in him his supreme self-manifestation. This sets him apart from all others. His transcendent sense of God and sense of mission only correspond to the absolute uniqueness of this eternal purpose of God concerning him. We are utterly unable to see that they could be borne by any being that we know as man. He is the manifested God—"the visible presentation of the invisible God." This cannot be said, in the same sense, of any other. Now, our only adequate statement of the inner reality—the essential meaning—of any being, can be given only in terms of the purpose which God calls

[1] Cf. King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 232, 233, 248, 249.

that being to fulfil. To see, then, that God's purpose concerning Christ is absolutely unique, and that God's purpose is, to make in Christ the completest possible personal manifestation of himself, is to see that Christ's essential relation to the Father is absolutely his own, unshared by any other. And, it may be added, there is no reason why this purpose of God concerning Christ should not be regarded as an eternal purpose, eternally realized.

But Christ is as clearly unique in his simply perfect response to this purpose of God. Our facts seem to point directly to the conclusion, that in him there was no moral hindrance to the fullness of the revelation God would make through him. His life is perfectly transparent, allowing the full glory of the character of God to shine through it. The harmony of his will with God's will is complete. If it be said that this last uniqueness is, after all, only difference in degree from other men, it must be answered, first, that degree here is so vast as to be practically kind. This is the perfect of Christ set over against the varyingly imperfect of all other men. Moreover, to ask here for difference in kind in any other

sense, is probably to make an unintelligent and impossible demand; for, in the nature of the case, the relations involved are spiritual and personal, and there cannot be, in strictness, in the fulfilment of such relations any real differences in kind.

5. *The Increasing Sense of Our Kinship with Christ, and of His Reality.*—Side by side with this recognition of the nature of Christ's uniqueness, there deserves to be set, as another outcome of the emphasis upon conceiving Christ as a personal revelation of God, the increasing sense of our kinship with Christ and of his reality. The connection here is by no means accidental, though it may seem almost paradoxical. We have plainly come in our day to our clearest recognition of the divinity of Christ through the sense of his transcendent character. But revelation in character requires the reality of his human life. The very route, therefore, by which we have most certainly reached our sense of Christ's divinity, leads also to an increasing sense of kinship with Christ, and so of his reality. So long as we seemed driven to conceive the divinity of Christ in terms that had no relation and no meaning for human life, just so long must he seem

to us to be really moving in another world and to take on the unreality of that other world quite hidden from us. But now Christ's life has meaning; we can enter into it and feel that it is real. With all its transcendence, the life does not move now simply in the sphere of the mysterious. It is no unreal drama, no play-struggle,—utterly failing to meet our real moral and spiritual needs. Least of all, in this supreme work for man, can the revealing life be only a show. It feels real. It is real. And, with clear sense of the inevitable inadequacy of the analogy, we still rest confidently in the conviction that God's relation to Christ may be best conceived after the analogy of the relation of the Spirit of God to our spirits; and that, when we try to press beyond that, we are attempting to rise into that sphere of a supposed supra-personal, for which we have no possible organ of vision, and where, therefore, we are thinking not more, but less, truly.[1]

With this sense of the reality of the personal, spiritual life of Christ, there naturally comes home to us the appropriateness and *practicability of his ideals.* They are seen to belong to us more surely, and properly to

[1] See King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, p. 209; and below, p. 209.

make demands upon us. It is, probably, not too much to say that, under the influence of the social consciousness, there has been a definite, growing approach to Christ's way of thinking, and to his ideal of life. This means a consciousness increasingly Christian in tone, and, therefore, in turn, increasingly better able to interpret the teaching and life of Christ, and so to give promise of a more Christian theology. None of us, probably, are fully conscious of the more subtle inconsistencies of even our best theological thinking, when measured by a completely Christian spirit. At least, with the insistence upon Christ as a personal revealer of a personal God, it must become more true that the meaning of all terms for the work of Christ shall be more clearly reasonable, more consistently ethical, and more completely spiritual; and then the immediate rooting of Christian theology in the Christian religion can be seen and felt.

### III. THE RECOGNITION OF THE PERSONAL IN GOD

The sense of the value and sacredness of the person must lead to the special recognition of the personal not only in man and in

Christ, but also in God. We have already seen reasons for believing that the social consciousness is peculiarly bound strongly to emphasize the personality of God, as in the end absolutely essential to its own justification. The social consciousness represents an ethical movement that can live only in the atmosphere of the personal.

1. *The Steady Carrying through of the Completely Personal in the Conception of God. Guarding the Conception.*—This pressure of the social consciousness toward an imperative faith in the fully personal God is most valuable, as offsetting the tendency in many quarters toward a scientific or even idealistic pantheism or monism that is quite impersonal. "For," in the language of Professor Howison, "the very quality of personality is, that a person is a being who recognizes others as having a reality as unquestionable as his own, and who thus sees himself as a member of a moral republic, standing to other persons in an immutable relationship of reciprocal duties and rights, himself endowed with dignity, and acknowledging the dignity of all the rest."[1] As this is preëminently the spirit of the social consciousness,

[1] *The Limits of Evolution*, p. 7.

it is plain that we have in the social consciousness an increasingly powerful motive for guarding the full personality of God.

It needs particularly to be noted, that we know no *definite* "supra-personal." Pantheism or any impersonal monism is forced, therefore, when it leaves the personal conception of God, to take a lower line of development, not a higher. The result is, that it is obliged to deny the highest attributes to God, and then, as Browning is fond of arguing, man steps at once into the place of God. Men cannot permanently remain satisfied with a philosophical view, of which that is the logical outcome. Certainly, such a view can get no support from the social consciousness, with its deep conviction of the supreme value and sacredness of the person.

Moreover, it is not to be forgotten, in estimating the value of a cosmic monism, that what the cosmological really means, ethically and religiously, to a people, must always depend upon their social ideals. The natural in itself contains no command. For any effective vital interpretation, therefore, even of its impersonal Absolute, pantheism is constantly thrown back upon the personal.

Only a clear, steady carrying through by theology of the completely personal in its conception of God can ultimately satisfy this sense of the value and sacredness of the person. Professor Nash does not speak too strongly when he says: "To fulfil her function the church must develop the doctrine of a Divine Personality. She has not always been true to it in the past. Too often, by her sacraments, by her theology, by her theory of inspiration, she has glorified the impersonal."[1]

Now, such an attempt, it is perhaps worth saying once more, is not to be thought of as a running away from a thorough-going metaphysical investigation. It rather takes the ground, indicated in the earlier discussion, of what may be called, in Professor Howison's language, personal idealism; and holds that spirit, person, *is* for us the ultimate metaphysical fact: the one reality to which we have immediate access; the reality from which all our metaphysical notions are originally derived; and, in consequence, the one reality which we can take as the key to the understanding of all else. And it believes that even essence and substance, the great

[1] *Ethics and Revelation*, p. 270.

words of the old metaphysics, can be really understood only as they are interpreted in personal terms. Ultimately, theology would hold, this would mean the interpretation of the essence of things in terms of the purpose of God concerning them — what he meant them to be.

In the attempt, then, clearly and steadily to carry through the conception of God as completely personal, theology may well guard carefully certain points. In the first place, theology does not mean to transfer to God human limitations; rather, it conceives him to be the only complete personality with perfect self-consciousness and full freedom, no part of whose being is in any degree foreign to himself. Nor, in the second place, does it mean to forget that the personal relations in which God stands to other persons are unique, and that, in three definite respects: that conviction of the love of God, as of no other, must underlie, as a great necessary assumption, all our thinking and all our living; that God is himself the source of the moral constitution of man, which must thus be regarded as an expression of the personal will of God, and the personal relation to God so have universal moral implications such as

no other personal relation can have; and in that God is such in his universal love for all, that it is impossible to come into right personal relation to God, and not at the same time come into right relation to all moral beings.[1]

2. *God is Always the Completely Personal God.*—If, now, theology is to do justice to the demands of the social consciousness for a full recognition of the personal in God, it must see clearly that God is *always* the completely personal God. Certain conclusions, not always admitted, are believed to follow from this position.

(1) *The Consequent Relation of God to "Eternal Truths."*—In the first place, there can be no sphere of eternal truths, thought of as either created outright by the will of God, or as existing of themselves independently of God and only to be recognized by him.

The difficulty is not merely that at least one of these views would put God in the same dependent relation to truth as we finite beings, and thus practically put a God above God. Nor is the difficulty merely that it is impossible to think the real existence of such a sphere of eternal truth, since truths

[1]Cf. King, *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 205 ff.

or laws can be said to exist only in one of two ways: either as the actual mode of action of reality, or as the perception and formulation in an observing mind of that mode of action. And these difficulties are both sufficiently serious.

But, from our present point of view, the great difficulty is, that trying to conceive God as either creating or coming to the recognition of truth, assumes, as Lotze points out, a *fragmentary* God, a God for whom truth is *not yet*. It assumes an action of the will of God apart from his reason, that is, a God not yet completely personal, not yet the full God of truth and character. A God for whom truth and duty are not yet, is certainly no true person. Most, if not all, of our metaphysical puzzles connected with the relation of God to what we call eternal truths, seem to me to grow out of this thought of an essentially fragmentary God.

We are driven, consequently, to a denial of both the Scotist and Thomist positions, as ordinarily conceived. It is true neither that the truth is true and the good is good because God wills it, nor yet that God wills the true because it is true and the good because it is good. Both views alike assume

the possibility of a fragmentary God, a God for whom at some time truth and goodness were not yet. But God has *always* been the completely personal God of truth and love, never a bare will and never a bare intellect. Hence, neither as an independent object to be recognized, nor yet as the external product of his will, can we think of the realm of eternal truth and goodness. We must rather say, God alone is the eternal being and absolute source of all, always complete in the perfection of his personality; and, therefore, what we call the eternal truths are only *the eternal modes of God's actual activity*. This alone seems to the writer to give a thorough-going theistic view, free from self-contradiction.[1]

(2) *Eternal Creation.*—But, further, if God is to be thought as *always* the completely personal God, we are led, also, immediately to the doctrine of eternal creation.

If God has had always a completely personal life, his entire being must have been always in exercise. Can we really think of such a God as simply quiescent, and not as always active? Is not his activity involved in his complete personality? The thought

[1] Cf. Lotze, *The Microcosmus*, Vol. II, pp. 690 ff.

of his possible quiescence arises probably out of an unconscious, but nevertheless unwarranted, transfer to God of our finite separation of will and act. But God is here, too, no fragmentary God; he has always been the completely personal God, always acting.

A second consideration carries us to the same conclusion. Theologians have felt that they have made a distinct step in advance in tracing creation to love in God, as, for example, Principal Fairbairn does. But this gives no real help as an explanation of creation as *beginning in time;* for one must at once ask, Was not the love of God eternal, and if this were the real reason leading to creation, must not, then, creation be eternal?

So far as I am able to see, there is nothing to lose and much to gain in clearness and satisfactoriness of thought in a frank acceptance of the doctrine of eternal creation. Not, of course, in the sense of an eternal dualism, in the sense of the thought of an eternity of matter set over against God, but in the clear sense of the eternal creative activity of God. And to such a doctrine of eternal creation, the social consciousness, in its emphasis on the completely personal, seems to me to lead.

(3) *The Unity and Unchangeableness of God.*—And, once more, if God is always the completely personal God, we shall conceive his own unity not as monotonous self-identity, but only as consistency of meaning. We shall not, therefore, transfer to God, pluming ourselves meanwhile upon a highly philosophical view, the mechanical unchangeableness of a rock; but we shall be rather concerned with the consistency of his character and the unchangeableness of his loving will, which would be the very reasons for his changing, adapting attitude toward his changing children. From this point of view, too, the sphere of law and the sphere of the actual, will seem to us, necessarily, to root in the sphere of the ideal; the *is* and the *must*, to rest in the *ought;* though we may not hope to trace the connections in detail. In a God, then, who is a completely harmonious person, never acting in fragmentary fashion, whose will and whose reason and whose love are never at cross purposes—only in such a God can the world find its adequate and unifying source. The world itself has real unity only in so far as it is the expression of the consistency of meaning of the purpose of God concerning it.

And this same thought of the consistency of the meaning of the purpose of God, I have elsewhere argued,[1] saves us from the necessity of a self-contradictory conception of the miraculous or supernatural, by its recognition of the dominant spiritual order. It also enables us to see, with Professor Nash, if the word personal is given sufficient breadth, that "the true supernatural is the personal, and wheresoever the personal is discovered, whether in the life of conscience or the life of reason, whether in Israel or Greece, there the supernatural is discovered. Upon this conception of the supernatural as the personal, apologetics must found the claims of Christianity. The divine and the human personality stand within 'Nature,' that is, within the total of being. But they both, the human as well as the divine, transcend the scope and reach of visible Nature."[2]

(4) *The Limitations of the Conception of Immanence.*—Indeed, it ought to be clearly recognized on all sides by those who believe in religion at all, that we cannot so exclusively emphasize the immanence of God, as many are now doing, and have a God at

[1] See *Reconstruction in Theology*, Chapter VI.
[2] *Ethics and Revelation*, p. 270.

all, beyond the finite manifestations. When the matter is so conceived, there is no real personal God with whom there can be any personal communion. Religion, thus, in any ordinary sense of it, is by this process made simply impossible; Positivism is the only logical result, and Frederic Harrison becomes the one sole, clear-sighted prophet among us, a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Such an outcome is possible for any, because, and in so far as, they are not true to the social consciousness in its demand for the completely personal God, who, in Martineau's language, is a genuinely "free spirit."[1]

3. *Deepening the Thought of the Fatherhood of God.*—But the influence of the social consciousness in its deepening sense of the value and sacredness of the person, of obligation and of love, not only tends to insist upon the completely personal in the conception of God, but also tends to deepen our thought of the Fatherhood of God.

(1) *History no Mere Natural Process.*—No mere on-going of an unfeeling Absolute, whatever name be given it, will ever satisfy the social consciousness. The new sense of the sorrow and ethical meaning of the his-

[1] See the fuller statement in the *Reconstruction in Theology*, pp. 96–108.

torical process demands, in the first place, that history shall not be regarded as a mere necessitated development, but a movement in which men effectively coöperate, never more consciously and clearly than to-day; and secondly, it demands a *God* who cares, who loves, who guides. History cannot be a mere holocaust to God.

(2) *God, the Great Servant.* — Rather, as we saw in the fourth chapter, the social consciousness requires a God whose purpose shall completely support its own purpose, and so requires us, with Fairbairn, to put Fatherhood before Sovereignty, not Sovereignty before Fatherhood, and requires us definitely to conceive God after Christ, as self-giving ministering love. It is one of the anomalies of Christian history, that the church has been so slow to cast off a pagan conception of God, and to come to a truly Christian view. We can hardly take in Christ's own revelation of God without some sharing in his sympathy for men. Some experience of our own is needed to unlock the revelation. And, so, the steady deepening of the social consciousness, both as to the value of the person and as to the sense of obligation, has certainly helped us to see that if God is to

be highest, he must be love, and thus the great servant, with transcendent obligations, entering really and sympathetically into all our life.

(3) *No Divine Arbitrariness.*—With such a conception of God, every trace of arbitrariness disappears. Calvinism, however strenuously insisted upon, means a far different thing for any man who really feels the pressure of the modern social consciousness, who has come to some real sense of the value and sacredness of the person, that is, who really sees God in Christ. The great truth of Calvinism, that God is the ultimate source of all, was perhaps never more secure than to-day; but that God, who is the absolute and ultimate source of all, is the fully personal God, whose will is never divorced from his reason and love, who knows no such abstraction as a bare and empty omnipotence without content or direction, but who is himself always living love. The bane of much so-called Calvinism is in this supposition of a fragmentary God, like a motion without direction or rate of speed. Arbitrary decrees are conceivable only from such a fragmentary God, not yet full and complete in his reality and personality.

(4) *The Passibility of God.*—It would seem, also, that any vital defense of the Fatherhood of God, required by the social consciousness, involves further the frank admission of the passibility of God, whether it has the look of an ancient heresy or not. We must unhesitatingly admit that, without which God can be no real God to us. "Theology has no falser idea than that of the impassibility of God. If he is capable of sorrow, he is capable of suffering, and were he without the capacity for either he would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that comes by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God."[1] With the growing sensitiveness of the social consciousness, the problem of suffering and of sin presses increasingly, and itself almost compels the assertion of the passibility of God. Nothing less can satisfy our hearts, nor indeed allow us to keep our reverence for God.

Certainly, with the increasingly clear vision, which the social consciousness is giving us, of sympathetic, unselfish, definitely self-sacrificing, loving leadership even among men, we shall not rest satisfied with less in

[1] Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 483.

God. We must have a suffering, seeking, loving God; because our Father, suffering in our sin, bearing as a burden the sin of each, and not satisfied while one child turns away; no mere on-looker, but in all our afflictions, himself afflicted. The cross of Christ, then, is only an honest showing of the actual facts of God's seeking, suffering love.

4. *As to the Doctrine of a Social Trinity.* —One inference for theology widely drawn from the social consciousness, it ought in fairness, perhaps, to be said, seems to me unjustified,—the doctrine of a so-called "Social Trinity." One must question the constant cool assumption made in these discussions of a social Trinity, that this view is the only alternative to what is called an "abstract simplicity." In any case, one would suppose, we must have in God all the richness and complexity of a complete personal life, freed from the limitations of finite personality. Something of the much that that involves we have been trying to point out. Here certainly is no "abstract simplicity."

Moreover, the conception of a social Trinity, so far as the writer can see, carries us inevitably to a tritheism of the most un-

mistakable kind. "Social" involves full personality. Nothing requires more complete personality than love, which the view affirms to exist between the persons of the immanent Trinity, between the distinctions in the very Godhead. The relations of Christ to God were, of course, distinctly and definitely personal; but it must not be forgotten that we are not permitted, on any careful theological view, to transfer these directly to the immanent relations of the Godhead.

The distinction drawn by Dr. W. N. Clarke,[1] between the doctrine of the biblical Trinity and the doctrine of the Triunity, I count of decided value; but after one has made the distinction, one may doubt the value of the contribution made by the doctrine of the Triunity. The really immanent relations of the Godhead are necessarily hidden from us, and are, also, so far as the writer can see, without ethical or religious significance for us, except in the way of possible injury through substituting some supposed altogether mysterious and incomprehensibly sacred, for the well-known and truly sacred shown in the ethical relations of common life.

[1] *Outline of Christian Theology*, pp. 161, ff.

The doctrine of the Triunity seems to have been originally intended to enable the church to hold the divinity of Christ. If we now get at that and hold that from quite a different point of view, the older way becomes less essential. We must, indeed, keep the ancient treasure, but we need not keep it in the same ancient chest. None of us— not the most orthodox—really find the *reasons* for holding the divinity of Christ in the doctrine of the Triunity. It is interesting to observe how widely separated from the doctrine of the Triunity are the considerations which really move men to faith in the divinity of Christ. That doctrine is, at the very most, only our philosophical supplement intended to bring that, which on other grounds we have come to believe, into unity with our thought of God.

But, at least, we must so conceive the divinity of Christ, as not to get two or three Gods. And a "Social Trinity" does not seem to me to avoid that, except in terms. However, therefore, we are to solve our problem, we are not to take *that* way out.

What Dr. Clarke calls the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, on the other hand,

seems to me to contain the very heart of Christianity, whatever philosophical theory we put beneath it; and it became, therefore, as expressed in the baptismal and benediction formulas, the great daily confession of the church, since it strongly expresses that of which we have been speaking,—the living love of God, a life of absolutely self-giving love, of eternal ministry.

The biblical Trinity is, in truth, what it has sometimes been called, the trinity of redemption; and, for me, directly emphasizes the great facts of redemption. Here there are three great facts: First, the Fatherhood of God, that God is in his very being Father, Love, self-manifesting as light, self-giving as life, self-communicating, pouring himself out into the life of his children, wishing to share his highest life with them, every one. Second, the concrete, unmistakable revelation of the Father in Christ, revealed in full ethical perfection, as an actual fact to be known and experienced; no longer an unknown, hidden, or only partially and imperfectly revealed God, but a real, living God of character, counting as a real, appreciable, but fully spiritual fact in the real world. And, third, the Father revealing himself by his Spirit in

every *individual* heart that opens itself to him, in a constant, intimate, divine association, which yet is never obtrusive, but reverent of the man's personality, making possible to every man the ideal conditions of the richest life.

What metaphysical theory we put under that confession of our full Christian faith, does not seem to me to be of prime importance. Men may count it of great importance; but it can hardly be of first importance, since, at the very most, only the beginnings of such a theory can be found in the great New Testament confession of Christ.

5. *Preëminent Reverence for Personality, Characterizing all God's Relations with Men.*— But the very heart of the conviction, on the part of the social consciousness, of the value and sacredness of the person, is its *reverence for personality;* and this thought has much significance for theology, for, if this judgment of the social consciousness is justified, it must be regarded as preëminently characterizing God in all his relations with men.

(1) *Reflected in Christ.*—When, in the first place, we turn to Christ as the supreme revelation of God, we cannot fail to see that this reverence for the personal marks every

step he takes. It begins, of course, in the priceless value which Christ gives to each person, as a child of the living, loving Father.

And it seems to determine his *whole method* with his generation and with his disciples. It is shown in the initial battle in the temptations, as to the form his work was to take, and as to the means to be employed. There was here, as we have seen, from the start an absolute subordination of all unspiritual and unethical methods in the building of the kingdom. There is to be no over-riding of the free personality anywhere. He faced successively the temptations to place his dependence on the mere meeting of men's material needs—the kingdom by bread; the temptation to place his dependence on that which appealed most strongly to the oriental mind—the use of wonder-working power—the kingdom by marvel or ecstasy; the temptation to place his dependence on force—the kingdom by force. But Christ sees clearly that God is no mere supplier of bread; that God is no mere wonder-worker, no mere giver of wonderful experiences; and that God is not a tyrant to conquer by force. Everywhere, therefore, he sets aside whatever may override the free personality. He would replace

all the attractive and seemingly rapid methods of the kingdom by bread, the kingdom by marvel, and the kingdom by force, with the slow and tedious and costly but reverent method of the spiritual kingdom by spiritual means, the kingdom of God by God's way —of a trust freely won, a humility spontaneously arising, a love gladly given. He can take no pleasure in any kingdom but one of free persons.

In the same way, in his dealings with the inner circle of his disciples, there seems to have been the most scrupulous regard for their own needed initiative. He apparently makes no clear announcement of himself as Messiah even to the disciples until late in his public ministry, and, then, only after they have been brought, through weeks, if not months, of unusually close personal contact and impression of his spirit, into their own confession of him. He steadily abjures, that is, all dogmatism about himself, and leads them along by a purely spiritual method to a confession of him, that may be truly their own. There is no piling up of proof-texts from the Old Testament, to show that he is the Messiah. He seems never to have attempted any proof with his disciples. In-

deed, he seems purposely to have chosen the rather ambiguous title, "the Son of Man," that men might be left free to come by moral choice to him.

The surpassingly significant fact, that Christ's chief work in the establishment of the kingdom of God, as seems to me beyond doubt, was his personal association with a few men; that, probably, a full third, perhaps more, of his very brief so-called public ministry was taken up with a period of definitely sought comparative retirement with the inner circle of the disciples—all this points to the same recognition of the fundamental importance in Christ's eyes of such a reverence for the person. The kingdom of God can be founded only by the full winning of free persons into his discipleship. The kingdom is first and last a kingdom of free persons, in Dr. Mulford's language, always a "Republic of God." Professor Peabody's emphasis on the essential importance of Christ's individualism, that "Jesus approaches life from within, through the inspiration of the individual,"[1] it need not be said, goes upon the same assumption of Christ's reverence for the person.

[1] *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, p. 101.

In his really public ministry the same spirit appears; for Jesus seems to me here constantly to be standing with a kind of moral shudder between the spirit of contempt in the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the outraged personality of the common people, even of the publicans and sinners. He feels the contempt even for these least, as a blow in his own face.

That glimpse which the Revelation gives us of Christ standing and knocking at the heart's closed door, is a true picture forevermore not only of the attitude of Christ's earthly life, but of God's eternal relation to us. Men may over-ride and outrage us, and even think that they show the more love thereby; God, never. This principle, then, we may take as absolutely crucial, in our judgment of God's dealings with us.

(2) *In Creation.*—It is fundamental even in creation. The very fact of the creation of persons implies it. Such a creation can have no significance, if, in the language already quoted from Howison, God's "consciousness is void of that recognition and reverence of the personal initiative of other minds which is at once the sign and the test of the true person."

And if love is, for a moment, to be thought of as the motive of creation, it required for any satisfaction of it, persons who could freely respond to that love.

The definite bestowal of the fateful gift of moral freedom, with the practical certainty of sin—the creation of beings who could choose against him—shows how deeply planted in the very being of God is this principle of reverence for the person.

Here, too, the impossibility of arbitrary divine decrees meets us. This would be treating a person as a thing, and God himself may not do that and remain God. If a man cannot see his way to a faith both in the divine foreknowledge and in the moral initiative of men, therefore, he must not hesitate to choose even the divine nescience of the free acts of men, rather than think of God as compelling men. Our whole moral universe tumbles about our ears, if he who is the source of all is not in earnest with persons. And yet there is much theological thinking, of which the common notions of a personal reign of Christ on the earth may be taken as an example, that practically looks to a kingdom by compulsion. A kingdom of free spirits cannot be merely decreed.

(3) *In Providence.*—And this same principle of reverence for personality must be felt to be the guiding motive and key, as well, in the providence and government of God. God keeps his hands off. He must so act as to call out, not to suppress, individual initiative.

This is, perhaps, the deepest reason for a sphere of law, that there may be a realm in which a person can have his own free development, uninterfered with by any moral compulsion.

If, now, this sphere of law is to be any true training ground for character, as we saw in the third chapter, results must not be forthwith set aside, the mutual influence of men must hold all along the line.

Even in the case of great evils, God does not step in at once to set things right. Character is an exceedingly costly product. This is no play-world, either as to mutual influence or as to freedom. God guards most jealously the freedom and personality of men. He never forgets that character must be from within. He will not accept, as Christ would not, a faith compelled by "signs." Hence, too, we are left to *ask*, and much is left to depend on our asking. So,

also, God does not remove all difficulties and give sight in place of faith. He seems even careless, often, of how things go; for he would not only appeal to the heroic in us, but he wishes to make it impossible for us to confuse prudence and virtue in ourselves or others, and so to give us the opportunity and the joy of a real moral victory, of knowing that we have made a genuinely unselfish surrender to the right.

In the light of this deep-lying principle of God's sacred reverence for the person, one learns to hush his former complaints, and with full heart to thank God that he lives in a world where righteousness and happiness do not always seem to fall together, and where, therefore, he can "serve God for naught." Oh, let us know, that it is not that God does not care, but that he cares so much—too much to sacrifice to present comfort the character of the child he loves —too much to shut him out from his highest opportunity.

(4) *In Our Personal Religious Life.*—And the same principle holds in our personal religious life. The unobtrusiveness of God's relation to us, of which we often complain, is rather to be taken as evidence of his

sacred respect for our own moral initiative, and proof of his careful adaptation to our moral need. Wherever a strong personality is in relation to a weaker, the stronger must maintain a conscientious self-restraint, lest he dominate the personality of the other, to the other's moral injury and to the hindering of his individuality. It *is* possible for a boy to be injuriously "tied to his mother's apron-strings." Much more is it necessary that God's relation to us should not be obtrusive. God must guard our freedom and our individuality. He must even take pains to hide his hand, as a strong, influential, but wise friend would do. As we go higher, our life is and must be increasingly one of faith, the Father's relation less and less obtrusive.[1] The times of vision are given to make us patient in our progress toward the goal. And after the vision comes often what Rendel Harris calls "the dark night of faith, when every step has to be taken in absolute dependence upon God and assurance that the vision was truth and was no lie."[2] We need the invisible God for character.

[1] Cf. Fairbairn, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 434, 435.

[2] *Union with God*, p. 109.

It is for this reason, no doubt, that God makes so rare use of overwhelming experiences in the religious life. He would be chosen with clear and rational self-consciousness, and so he rarely overpowers. And even in experiences which seem most overpowering, if the person is really awake to their true ethical and spiritual import, they will probably be found delicately adapted to call out the individual's own response. But for most of us such experiences prove a real temptation, because we allow the passively emotional to absorb our attention, and so lose the ethical and spiritual fruit. Where these marvelous experiences have been most marked, and have plainly given real help, they seem still, usually, to have been needed because of some false conception of God and the spiritual world that required a powerful corrective. Here they seem really to have been granted, as probably the transfiguration of Christ was to the disciples, as a concession to men's weakness, God consenting reluctantly to use for the time a lower line of appeal, because men are unable to rise to the higher appeal.

We have already seen the danger of the neo-platonic over-estimation of emotional

experience, and of sudden and magical crises in religion; and this danger is especially seen in much that is said concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. It seems as if it were simply true, for many earnest and sincere Christians, that the superstitions, which they had conscientiously put aside elsewhere in religion, all came back in their thought of the work of the Spirit. Here their relation to God has ceased to be thought of as a personal or moral or truly spiritual one; and they are looking more or less definitely for bodily thrills, for marked and overwhelming emotional experiences, or for sudden transformations—hardly to be called transformations of character—in the passive half-magical removal of temptations altogether. That is, they are looking for moral and spiritual results from unmoral and unspiritual processes. The exact point is this: Doubtless we are not narrowly to limit what the personal influence of the personal Spirit of God may do in transforming human life—the possibilities probably far transcend what we think—but we are clearly to see that the relation is personal, that the influence is spiritual and under strictly ethical conditions, if we are to escape from simply pagan superstition. Let us see

that, if God is a Personal Spirit and not an impersonal substance, then, as Herrmann says, he "communes with us through manifestations of his inner life, and when he consciously and purposely makes us feel what his mind is, then we feel himself."[1]

And, then, let us add, as has been already earlier said, that the deepening life in the Spirit becomes plainly a deepening personal friendship and communion with God, with laws—those of a growing friendship—that we may study and know and obey; and among these laws, none is of more central importance than this of the reverence for the person.

(5) *In the Judgment.*—And when we turn to God's relation to us in the judgment, we can be sure, I think, of a further application of this principle, contrary to common teaching and expectation. We have no reason to look forward to a time when the secrets of all, or of any, hearts shall be laid bare to all. In so doing, God would violate, it seems to me, the principle of his entire dealing with men, and give the lie to his own revelation in Christ and in history. For myself, Dr. Clarke's words carry immediate conviction:

[1] *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 143.

"No man needs to know the secrets of his neighbor, and be able to trace the justice of God through his neighbor's life, and no man who respects the sacredness of individuality will desire it. Neither revelation of his own secrets nor knowledge of another's seems a good thing to a self-respecting soul."[1]

Even the judgment itself proceeds, no doubt, in clear recognition of the free personality. We are "judged by the law of liberty." And we really choose our own destiny, as Phillips Brooks suggests in one of his most striking paragraphs. "By this law we shall be judged. How simple and sublime it makes the judgment day! We stand before the great white throne and wait our verdict. We watch the closed lips of the Eternal Judge, and our hearts stand still until those lips shall open and pronounce our fate, heaven or hell. The lips do not open. The Judge just lifts his hand and raises from each soul before him every law of constraint whose pressure has been its education. He lifts the laws of constraint, and their results are manifest. The real intrinsic nature of each soul leaps to the surface. Each soul's law of liberty becomes

[1] *An Outline of Christian Theology*, p. 464.

supreme. And each soul, without one word of commendation or approval, by its own inner tendency, seeks its own place. . . The freeing of souls is the judging of souls. A liberated nature dictates its own destiny. Could there be a more solemn judgment seat? Is it not a fearful thing to be judged by the law of liberty?"[1]

And we may be most certain, that, in any judgment by God, there can be no thought of "human waste." The man must remain for God, to the end, a child of God, a person of sacredness and value, to be dealt with always as capable of character. And it is along just this line that, independently of exegetical grounds, it seems to me, we are led to a decisive rejection of the doctrine of annihilation. And I know no more convincing putting of the matter than this brief but comprehensive statement of Fairbairn: "If there is any truth in the Fatherhood, would not annihilation be even more a punishment of God than of man? The annihilated creature would indeed be gone forever—good and evil, shame and misery, penalty and pain, would for him all be ended with his being; but it would not be so with God—out of

[1] *The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons*, p. 197.

his memory the name of the man could never perish, and it would be, as it were, the eternal symbol of a soul he had made only to find that with it he could do nothing better than destroy it."[1]

(6) *In the Future Life.*— Doubtless our difficulties are not at an end even so; but, at least, our conception of God is saved from self-contradiction; and the Father is seen as suffering in the sin of the son, and perpetually desiring and seeking his return, never satisfied so long as any child of his still refuses his place in the Father's love. This deep-going principle of reverence for personality, with which we are dealing, is the finest flower of human ethical development, and seems completely to shut out the possibility of compulsion by God at any time in the future life. A person will never be treated as a thing. The soul that turns to God must be won voluntarily.

And if, then, the abstract possibility of endless resistance to God by men cannot be denied; so neither can the possibility—perhaps one might even say, the practical probability—be denied that God, in his infinite love and patience and wisdom, may finally win them all

[1] *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 467.

out of their resistance. And the eternal hope is at least open; but it is open, it should be noted, only upon the fulfilment by men of precisely those moral conditions which hold now in the earthly life, and which ought now to be obeyed. There will never be an easier way to God. It is shallow thinking that supposes that, if there be any possibility of turning to God in the future life, it is of small moment that one should now put himself where he ought to be. The full results of all our evil sowing, we must receive. The utmost that on any rational theory, then, can be held out to men, is the hope that, facing a greater heritage of evil than now they face, they might return to God under the same condition of absolute moral surrender, which now holds, and the fulfilment of which is now far more easily possible to them.

And it ought not to be overlooked that, even if the principle of reverence for personality be much less far-reaching than is here affirmed, the annihilation of a soul by God could seem justified only upon the assumption that God foresaw the entire future, and knew that the soul would never turn to righteousness and God. But if the doctrine of annihila-

tion is to be justified on *that* ground, it is to be observed, that the same foreknowledge would have enabled God to know before creation all the finally incorrigible, if there were to be any such, and so he need not have called these into being at all. A goal, therefore, as great if not far greater, than that offered by the annihilation theory would be, thus, attainable simply upon the same assumption that must rationally be made by that theory, and, at the same time, the great objection to that theory—its violation of personality—would be avoided.

It seems probable that this very principle of reverence for personality contains the chief reason why more has not been revealed to us concerning the future life. Christianity is very far from satisfying our curiosity here. It gives little more than the absolutely needed assurance of the fact and worth of the life beyond. Details are either quite lacking, or given only in broadest symbols. This reticent silence of revelation seems needed if our individual initiative is not to be hindered, either by excess of motive on the one hand, or by the depression of an unappreciated ideal on the other hand.

On the one hand, that is, so far as we could

understand a detailed revelation of the future life, to set it forth with the realism of the present life would be to interfere with that unobtrusive relation of God to us, which we have seen to be so necessary to our highest moral training. We need, in this time of our training, a certain obscurity of spiritual truth; we need to walk by faith, not by sight. To be able so obviously to weigh the eternal realities against the temporal, would hinder rather than help our growth in loyal, unselfish character.

On the other hand, if a complete and indubitable revelation of the future life were given us, no doubt there would be much that could make but small appeal to us, and might even prove positively depressing, because we have not yet the experience which would interpret to us its meaning and open to us its joy. Our earthly life may furnish us an analogy. The joy of a grown man is often preëminently in his work, but he would find it difficult to explain to a child the source of his joy. And if the child were told that there would come a time in a few years when his chief joy would be found in work, the prospect would probably not seem to him inviting. The wisest

of us may be as little prepared to enter in detail into the meaning of the future life.

We may be content to know that the future life is, and is of value beyond that which we can now understand; and we may be assured that at least what we have already seen to be the ideal conditions of the richest life,[1] as now we understand life, will be fully met in the future life. We can hardly doubt, therefore, that the two great centers of the life beyond must be association and work; though we may not know the precise forms that these will take, nor how greatly both may deepen beyond our present conception. Steadily deepening personal relations, rooted in the one absolutely satisfying relation to God in Christ, there must be; and work, in which one may lose himself with joy, because it is God's work. This, at least, the future life will contain. We can hardly go farther with assurance.

But perhaps even this may suggest, that men may vary much in the proportionate emphasis laid upon these two great sources of life, and still alike come into a genuine and rewarding relation to God. That God has counted individuality among men to be

[1] See above, pp. 68 ff.

of prime significance, the facts of creation hardly allow us to doubt. Possibly it is only another application of this same principle of reverence for the person, in the recognition of that individuality which has its great joy in work, which is to be found in what Professor George F. Genung suggestively calls "an apocalypse of Kipling." In Kipling's poem to Wolcott Balestier, Professor Genung sees "the discovery of a religion, or assignable and eternally rewardable relation to God, in those whose inner life is not introspective or self-expressive." Their spiritual life "serves God with the joy which comes of following and satisfying, in the sphere of his plans, the eager bent of a conquering will." "It is the religion of work and of daring." And "it is only in the open vision of an eternal world that their secular ardor, which was unconsciously serving God all along, begins to come to the perception of a transcendent master and to be transformed into an adoration, an obedience and loyalty, a 'will to serve or to be still as fitteth our Father's praise.'"

It is quite possible that through our very failure to enter into God's own deep reverence for the person, in the recognition of

man's divinely given individuality, as well as through failure to recognize the essential like-mindedness of men, we have been shutting the door of hope, where God has not shut it, and have limited beyond warrant the divine mercy. Even in the life of heaven men cannot be all alike. "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the Lord hath power to make him stand."[1]

[1] Romans 14:4.

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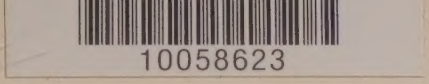
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